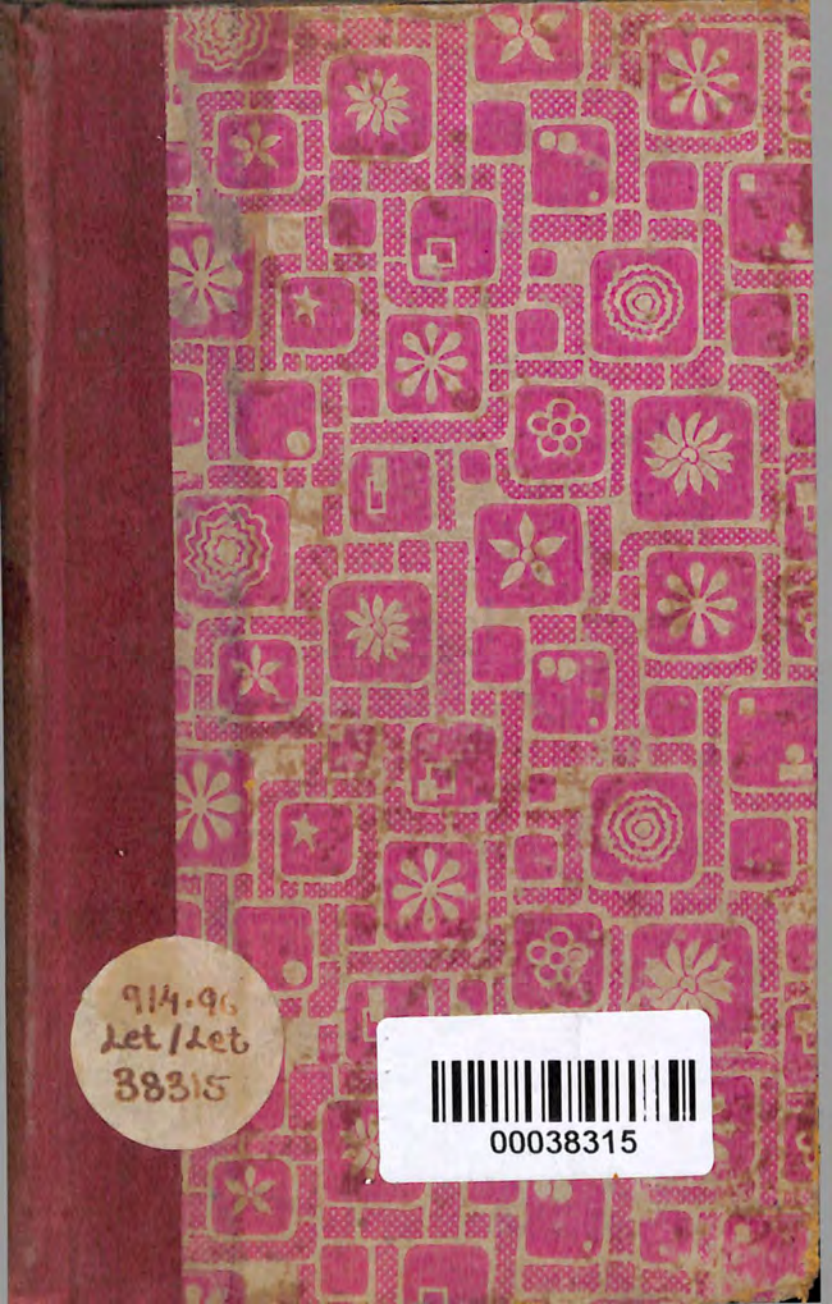
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LETTERS

FROM

38315

THE DANUBE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"GISELLA," "SECOND LOVE," ETC.

AA-h-15

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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LETTER XII.

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I PROMISED you an invitation, dear coz., to a country mansion of a more magnificent description than that in which I lingered so long above Gran. I now fulfil my promise, and beg you to come with me to the villa-château of the wealthy young noble in which I have been spending a few days. We shall not linger there much; but there

is stuff enough in the neighbourhood of this spot to excite some interest.

In the mansion itself there is nothing which betrays those peculiarly national Hungarian characteristics, which it is my especial desire to place before you in my letters; but about the Italian-looking house, as well as grounds, there is impressed that charm so difficult to describe, that must be felt to be appreciated,—the charm belonging to the balmy air and rich luxuriance of a southern climate.

The colonnaded terrace before the house, which, built at some distance from the river, with one side parallel to the stream, the other resting against the foot of a skirting ridge of wooded hills, looks up a long line of garden-park, about a mile and a half in length, to the distant promontory and crowning fortress of Peterwardein, as a termination to the lovely view, wears the aspect of one of the most fascinating platforms which the best Italian villas are able to present, and offers a broad, cool shade for the lovers of out-of-door life. Each column is embowered in a thick circle of bushes, formed of orange and lemon trees, pomegranates, laurels of every variety, camellias, and the thousand diversified specimens of so many

other of the larger plants of a southern country, which tower up the white pillars in round pyramids, and are mixed with lesser shrubs and bright flowers in a perfect thicket at the base. A similar colonnaded gallery above forms an immense balcony to the upper apartments.

On the lower elevated terrace stand tables and arm-chairs and lounging-stools innumerable, canopied above by creeping plants, which hang in festoons from all kinds of vases: here lie books and lady's work; here is set out the morning breakfast; here the tea at sunset, when bright fire-flies come to pay homage to the great suns, which attract them from the globes of the lamps, and, their rites performed, nestle into the many leaves that hang over our heads, and, when a faint perfumed breeze comes hummingly from the distant trees, and soothes the nerves into that *dolce far niente* luxurious feeling, that brings oblivion, for the moment, of all care and all *ennui*.

On the left of this terrace, steps descend to the drive entrance, which leads, through trees and bushes and past orange-house and private theatre, to that side of the mansion: on the right, steps cut in the hill side mount to the woods and thickets above: in the middle, in front, another broad, gentle

flight of stone stairs leads down to the small flower-garden, immediately before the *façade*, which is severed from the rest of the great garden-park by a gilded oriental-looking trellis-work, half concealed by the creeping plants that hang about it, with their bell-flowers of a thousand colours. In this lesser garden is here a bower, there a shady bench beneath a weeping ash, there, again, to the right, a fountain stream, which, trickling from the bush-covered, mossy banks of the hill, flows through the stone vase of a reclining Naïad. Beyond lie the long pleasure-grounds, somewhat hemmed in between the mountain sides and the great river, all diversified with hill and wood, among which peep pavilion, and summer-house, and temple, as far as the eye can reach, and telling of that luxuriant thickness and massive profusion of vegetation in which a southern land rejoices. This exuberant richness of nature may be expected, when I tell you that we are not far from the Turkish frontiers, and yet in a climate where the heat is so tempered as not to produce aridity. These pleasure-grounds are open to the public; and every day groups of officers, with fair ladies on their arms, from Neusatz or Peterwardein, or lounging priests of Catholic or Greek persua-

sion, or young people telling each other love-tales, or grave Servians, from the neighbouring frontiers, in their rich attire, with their long, thickly embroidered robes of full dark colour, their gold braided jackets and scarfs, may be seen wandering, now and then, along pathways and amongst woods at a little distance from the house: on *fête*-days and holidays their numbers increase.

Beyond, if we penetrate into this park, are to be found lovely little dells, surrounded with amphitheatres of flowers, and little ravines crossed by rustic bridges, and opening glades with statues peeping from their skirting thickets, and vine-gardens, and flower-gardens, isolated in some wilderness wood, as if dropped there by mistake from Flora's cornucopia, and green-houses and hot-houses, and a great Gothic summer-house devoted to the culture of camellias alone, and a lake, and grotto, and cascade, all surrounded, again, by wood-covered hills; and all this is southern, again, in its plentitude of luxuriance.

Among the hills that skirt this garden-park are pathways innumerable and wooded thickets where you may lose yourself, and precipices which suddenly arrest your steps, and platforms covered with vineyards, commanding the loveliest views

over the winding Danube and its numerous green islands, and the amphitheatre of Syrmian mountains, and, beyond the river, over the plain from which rise the many towers and steeples of Neusatz, reflecting themselves in pools of late inundations, that try to look like real lakes and cannot, on account of trees or tall rushes in the midst, and make the only ugly spots in the picture.

I have deeply felt the influence of this southern charm since I have been here, as, during the heat of a summer's mid-day sun, I have lain upon the cool grass under the shade of a wooded precipice, and attempted a sketch of some vista, through which came a glimpse of the Danube, or the towers of the camellia-house, or the rocks and walls of the fortress of Peterwardein, or listlessly scribbled down a few vague thoughts, as if thoughts I had—as if, in fact, I *could* think, when my whole being was thus soporifically subdued by the influence of the balmy summer atmosphere, as I lay and looked lazily upwards to the spaces of clear blue sky,—my bed the thick moss,—the overhanging banks my curtain,—the wild vine, that festooned them, my drapery,—my chamber roof the young trees exuding aromatic gums, and sometimes fanning

my head with their sweeping boughs, as a gentle breeze waved their foliage, through which a few dancing streaks of sun-light would play upon my half-closed eyelids,—my only companions, the charming little harlequin lizards, who would, ever and anon, peep out of their moist holes, lift up their little heads, gaze on me with a sort of wonder in their cunning little eyes, and then slip, in startled hurry, back again.

How deeply have I again felt it on those summer nights, when the moon shone bigger and brighter than in more northern lands—so bright, indeed, as almost to cheat my little friends, the lizards, into a belief that it was their divinity, the warm sun, and cause them to peep out again by mistake, and run up the walls of the pavilion that stands so charmingly at some distance from the house, to worship him, and then run down again in alarm, when they found it was not day,—when its light inundated the open spaces with a flood of silver, but left the thickets full of a deep, mysterious, fairy-like darkness,—and the little green tree-frogs croaked amorously above my head, from among the branches of the prickly acacia or the sensitive palm, which shrivelled discreetly at the light touch of their little feet, as they crept to

their love-rendezvous along its twigs,—and the nightingale poured forth a torrent of song, until wearied of its exertions, it flew away into a tulip-tree, and pecked at its buds in wantonness of sport,—and the vineyards were still singing their song of praise to the Creator, by night as well as by day, untired in their fulness and their strength—and the air was balmier, I fancied, than I had ever felt it even in the bowery heights of Castelamare; and sadness and joy, and regret and hope, poured themselves alternately into the heart in such deep draughts, that it grew intoxicated, and giddy in its intoxication. Yes! there is a charm in this lovely climate which passes all description, and which, I repeat, you must feel with me to understand.

At the further end of the park, a gateway, guarded by a sphinx, opens upon the river's banks; and just out of its limits, lies, by the water-side, a rustic place of entertainment, which, did I live at Neusatz or Peterwardein, would often entice me to many an idle wandering thither. The low buildings which compose its various departments of dwelling-house, wine-cellar, stable, or dairy, all stand apart, and are all sheltered each in its little grove of acacias. The coarsely painted walls are

tapestried with overhanging branches; the tables and benches have their tufts of trees to each group of them; and on a holiday evening, when these tables are surrounded by holiday crowds of townspeople from Neusatz, and gaily uniformed military from Peterwardein, and peasants in their full white attire, and Ratzian damsels of this part of the country, with painted cheeks and dark oriental visages, and necklaces of silver coins about their throats, and bright flowers in their hair, or, perchance, a Servian or two, and all the varieties of costume which the Babel mixture of tribes in this part of Hungary peculiarly affords, (of which more further on,) and a still greater Babel confusion of language ensues, the garden-court of this place of entertainment is one of the prettiest scenes imaginable for a painter, particularly when the sun is setting, as I have seen it, in a blood-red sky, and its reflexion paints the glowing expanse of the Danube of the same blood-red colour, and in this lake of living and rolling fire, where it is visible through the rows of trees that skirt it, are boats, tied to their trunks, and awaiting pleasurers, that dance up and down upon its burning waves like so many salamanders.

From a shelving bank further up the stream

I have witnessed, also, a scene, which will long remain singularly impressed upon my memory. From the little rural quay of the village of Kammenitz was launched forth upon the great waters of the Danube one of those huge heavy ferry-boats, so flat in their make that they scarcely seem to rise above the stream, which ply with passengers, and heavy wares, and carts, and oxen, and horses, all pell mell, between the various villages upon the banks. A violent storm was coming up as this unwieldy carcase, evidently overloaded with all these varieties of passengers, living and inanimate, four-footed and biped, was swept by its rowers from the shore: a boatman stood at the end, with a heavy oar, as his only rudder; and from the midst of this compact crowd came the strains of a Sclavonian bag-pipe, played in so lugubrious a melody, and accompanied by such lamentable whinings from a dog on board, that they seemed to me a funeral dirge in augury of the probable fate of the danger-laden boat. I watched its course down the stream with much anxiety. Suddenly came from above the river such a cloud of dust, so like a deluge of sand in the desert, that the whole landscape was instantly obscured in a thick black veil, and the boat was lost to my sight. This tempest of rushing

darkness was immediately followed by the bursting forth of one of those thunder-storms which I have described in a former letter, accompanied by a fearful gale. I gave up the wretched overloaded boat with its crew for lost; but I afterwards heard that it had reached Neusatz in safety, after a narrow escape.

It would be a thankless task to me to give you any detailed account of the interior of the mansion in which I am an inmate, or its household appointments, or the modern Parisian-looking drawing-rooms, and *boudoirs*, and libraries, or the great columned ball-room, or the marble hall of the vast dining-room, or the numerous liveried attendants and on-hangers,—to say nothing of all the attendants on stables, coach-houses, gardens, and garden-houses,—or the various arrangements that have no particular national characteristics; and I shall not, therefore, expatiate upon them.

The hours of meals alone, which do not vary much from the other early customs of the country, are essentially national; the cookery of our enormous dinners is a mixture of Hungarian fare with French dishes. The habits of country life, and lounging, and driving, and riding, are such as they would be in England, saving the modifications pro-

duced by the difference of hours, and the fact that the lady-guests, instead of monopolising the drawingroom of a morning, generally keep to their own apartments until the early dinner-hour: after that division of the day, the lingerings on the terrace, the wanderings in the park, and the drivings or ridings in the country around, unite our party, or groups of it, pell-mell.

There is one portion of the interior of the house, however, which I must mention, as having again a smack of a southern climate and foreign tastes. The mansion is built round an interior garden-court, colonnaded into galleries on two sides, filled with flowers, bushes, and little fountains, and draperied around with hanging festoons of vine and creeping plants, that twine among the gallery pillars: several of the apartments of the ground-floor open by long windows into this interior court; and, although probably this space placed in the middle of the ground-plan of the building contributes greatly to the want of comfortable communication between the several apartments, to the disorder of outer stairs and inner stairs, and useless passages, and no passages where passages should be, and, in fact, to a distracting absence of harmony of appointments in the many suites of apartments and cham-

bers, which prevails throughout the house, yet this cool retreat in the centre of a large establishment has a soothing charm about it; it is admirably adapted for early morning chit-chats or moonlight flirtations.

The village, from which the drive-up sweeps into the premises of its lord, behind the house, is of considerable extent, and built as all villages and minor towns are invariably built in Hungary, in spreading roads, each low house being separated from its neighbour by garden, orchard, and clumps of tufty acacias. A part of this large village extends in road-like streets, parallel to the river, or along its banks: another portion climbs, more picturesquely, the steep gullies and ravines of the hills behind. Above, upon a hill crown, stands the small white-washed Catholic church of the village; below, upon an open green, is the church belonging to the part of the population of the Greek persuasion.

The animated confusion that prevails through the whole of Hungary, in the mixture of so many tribes in one kingdom, seems to be concentrated into one point in this part of the country. Specimens of almost all the different races dispersed throughout the land may be found in a

very small compass here, forming a miniature pattern of the great whole. Each possesses its exemplifying types, not only in costume, language, and physiognomy, but in manners, opinions, and religion; and still more than ever the impression is conveyed, that has often crossed me before—the impression, namely, that in this confusion, without fusion, of separate races, and languages, and, consequently, of interests, feelings, and prejudices, which clash and refuse to mingle, as much as among the Saxons and Normans in the early days of England, or even more, a great bar exists in Hungary to that progress of civilisation and prosperity which one strong national sentiment can alone effect, and that a great length of time must elapse before this hinderance to the more brilliant destinies of the country can be removed.

But, as we are here in the part of Hungary which is more generally characterised by the name of Sclavonia, the population, as may be naturally supposed, is chiefly of Sclavonian race, and of that "genus" of the "species" called Ratzian, a name which, it may be said *en passant*, is used as a term of contempt, just as much as that of "*Németh*," or "German," in the proud, exclusive, and uncompromising spirit of nationality of the Hungarian,

who, among the lower classes, has invariably the very worst opinion of his neighbours not of Magyar race, and despises them accordingly: the prevailing language, consequently, is that dialect of the Sclavonian denominated indistinctly Illyrian or Ratzian; the Magyar tongue is seldom heard; the German even is far more frequent, on account of the many trading colonists that have established themselves in these districts.

The prevailing religion, also, is that of the Greek church, especially in the more mountainous parts of the comitat of Syrmia—not that dissenting portion of it, which, in other parts of Hungary, has united itself to the Romanist Catholics, but the original Greek church, agreeing in tenets with that of Russia, of which the Czar constitutes himself the head. In this village, as in many other villages and towns upon the Danube's banks, the populations holding to either faith—the Roman Catholic or the Greek—are tolerably equally divided, it would seem. Generally speaking, these populations, spite of their differences of religious creeds, live in very good harmony among each other.

It might be supposed that the deviations between the general European calendar and the

Greek or Russian calendar, and the consequent differences in fixing all the great *fête*-days, fasts, and festivals of Christianity,—such as Christmas Lent, and Easter,—would prove constant subjects of dispute as matters of observance. But, to avoid all such sources of discussion, the religionists of the two creeds have come to the amicable arrangement—an arrangement willingly conceded by a people of so indolent a character and holiday-loving a nature—of observing mutually the festivals of both churches.

The peasant thus thinks to have won a day of rest from labour and of holiday enjoyment; but, as the quantum of labour for the lord of the land has still to be accomplished,—as far as that arrangement still here exists,—it is laziness alone that profits, religion, it seems to me, gaining little or nothing by these double festivals. But, as I have just said, harmony is thus, generally speaking, established between the two creeds. There are times, it is true, when collisions will take place among the parties, and an outbreak and affray will occur, arising, like a sudden eruption of a volcano, from some hidden fire beneath, no one seems well to know how or why.

Russian agents, who move mysteriously about,

and are still more numerous in this country than in most others,—although nowhere there seems to be a lack of them,—are said to be the main instruments in fostering these differences, which may one day be turned to the advantage of the Russian government, and of designs that wait patiently for their accomplishment. But of this I purpose giving you a few vague sketches another day. Suffice it, for the time, to say, that, as it is well known what interpretation the Greek priests give to their prayers for the "Emperor," in which they certainly cheat the Emperor of Austria out of the benefit of prayers appointed for his Imperial Majesty, the King of Hungary, be the emperor they mean who he may, and what pains are taken to instil this same interpretation into the minds of their flocks of the Greek persuasion, it may be easily imagined what spirit is constantly at work among these populations, and what tendency is endeavoured to be given to their feelings.

The manœuvres and intrigues, also, of the Greek priests are said to have latterly reached a pitch of openness in attempts at conversion, which was until now unknown: banners have been carried about in procession, tracts distributed, cunningly inculcating national, *i. e.* Sclavonian-Greek-Rus-

sian feelings, for the term here is all one, or, in other words, anti-national feelings, in an Hungarian sense,—the chambers of the sick or dying of the other faith assailed,—the reluctant seduced by bribes, distributed under the guise of charity, and promises—and, above all, feelings of irritation excited, fostered, encouraged among populations disposed to live in peace, in opposition to all Christian duty, to every doctrine of Christian charity, peace, and goodwill to all men.

These intrigues, which as may be supposed have long been conducted in a more underhand manner, have lately, I am told, excited so much general dissatisfaction, so much ill-will and disunion among families, so much fray, and collision, and quarrelling among the peasants, and have opened the eyes of many influential proprietors so greatly to ulterior results, that discussions on the subject have led to very hot disputes, not only in the congregations or county meetings of the Sclavonian districts, but of other parts of Hungary, and that orders and counter-orders, permissions and retractions of permission, as to the extent to which the Greek priests are allowed to go in their attempts at conversion, have been issued by the Austrian government. The subject will probably form matter for lively

and interesting debate in the next Hungarian diet.

But let us leave this topic for a time,—I may have further cause to allude to some part of it again,—and pay a visit to the Greek church of the village; the Catholic contains but little worthy of notice. The gaudy splendour of the Greek places of worship are no subject of novelty to either of us; but there is a look of romantic and *bizarre* adornment about this village-church, which I did not expect to find in it, and which may be worthy of a trifling notice. The steeple rises, cupola above cupola, in diminishing tiers, as is greatly the fashion in Greek churches in general. The body of the building is small and low, and wears a heavy but not disagreeable Byzantine look about it. The exterior walls are adorned, between the windows, with round arches, in the inner niche-like spaces of which are painted great fresco pictures of saints and saintly legends, not ill-executed, or without a certain brilliant harmony of colouring, in spite of their roughness. The interior possesses the same striking appearance of a somewhat savage magnificence, and is in a rich style of decoration, which I had certainly not expected to have found in a village place of worship.

The partition which divides the female from the male part of the congregation is adorned with light and tapering painted columns; the screen which separates the front altar space from the inner sanctuary is richly decorated, between its dividing and subdividing columns, with pictures of saints upon gilded grounds; the door itself, which closes in the sanctuary, is of burnished brass filigree-work, that astonishes by its glitter, and gives a splendour to the mystery of the cloudy screened rites performed within. All this might, perhaps, have been expected in a metropolitan temple, but certainly not in a church of so much smaller pretensions.

I was present at the divine service here upon a Sunday morning, and was surprised, also, at the richness of the priest's vestments and the dresses of his attendants, as they issued forth from the sanctuary at the appointed part of the ceremony, to continue the service before the altar railings.

About the whole scene there was a wild, romantic charm, to which the savage oriental faces of the Ratzian men, and the scarcely less dark, but less rugged, features of the women, among the congregation, all in their holiday attire, greatly added.

The prostrations of the devout were as deep as is usual in the Greek church.

Among the crowd were several villagers, who were pointed out to me as Catholics; but, certainly, if their genuflexions were not as profound, they exhibited as much quiet devotion as those of the Greek faith, and were evidently disposed to seek a blessing wherever they might find it, and live in peace with their neighbours of another creed.

A similar scene of the same evidence of disposition to harmonise together among these followers of different faiths, I witnessed, on the other side, upon the arrival of the Catholic bishop of the district in the village, during his confirmation rounds. The people who crowded the hill-top before the Catholic church were as much mixed as in the Greek temple; but the "*vivats*" and shouts of welcome to the bishop upon his arrival came alike from all mouths; and the church during the ceremony was filled equally by those of both parties. There might, certainly, be only a desire of holiday enjoyment or show, or an excuse for idleness, in all this mingling on the occasion of a ceremony belonging to the one church alone; but, whatever the cause of this disposition, pity it is that it cannot be allowed to remain in peace.

The scene of the arrival of the bishop was a bright and gay one, as he drove up in his open carriage to the humble house of the Catholic pastor, opposite the church; some of his attendant clergy accompanied him, and several of the *comitat's beamten*, or county officers, followed in other carriages or on horseback. Before the bishop's carriage rode a guard for protection, given to his reverence by the county magistrates, more as a matter of honour than of any necessity, during his confirmation rounds.

The dress of these guards was the usual hussar uniform; but the white gaily braided cloaks that they wore flung over one shoulder, their fur caps with hanging ends and tassels, and especially the many neat pistols that loaded their leathern girdles, gave them a brigand look, which was mightily interesting and picturesque, but no ways in consonance with the character of him they were deputed to guard.

The procession which moved afterwards from the pastor's dwelling to the church was such as might be witnessed in all Catholic countries on similar occasions; but the scene of the whole assembled crowd in all its gay variety of costume was of that brightly variegated description which

Hungary alone—how often must I repeat it?—exhibits so continually. His reverence the bishop, with all his attendant clergy and officers, afterwards dined at our table; and a mild, good-humoured, simple-minded man he appeared to be, but so well-informed, however, upon all matters concerning foreign lands, and England to boot, as to put the only Englishman at table to shame.

Peterwardein and Neusatz are naturally the points to which our drives frequently tend: ladies have always little purchases to make, however uninviting the only shops where they can be made; the act of "shopping" in itself, even without definite purpose, seems to be one of the necessities of female civilised life in all countries, and here, also, we are sometimes forced to submit to this necessity. But the small town of Peterwardein, attached to the fortress, and enclosed within its defences, in spite of the prison-like aspect that it wears, in common with even far larger fortified towns, or, perhaps, in consequence of that very same sad and weary-hearted look, has always an attraction of romance in my eyes, which makes me a not unwilling visitor within its walls. It is not the romance of antiquity, not the romance of historical

recollections, but the romance of its present every-day aspect. You must not be surprised, then, if you find Peterwardein figuring under another form in my *souvenirs* of this part of Hungary, and detect me retracing elsewhere many sentiments, and descriptions, and pictures which I must invariably plagiarise from myself, as I embody them in a more fanciful form than in the plain straightforward letters I address to you. How far stealing from oneself is a venial sin, I must leave to others to judge: to take from the homely every-day purse a coin here or there, and put it into the embroidered *gypsire* I have fancied pardonable; and I trust you may say so too.

But to return to Peterwardein. There is always a great indefinite mysterious charm to me in all those complications of walls, and gateways, and moats, and bridges, and precipices flanked with masonry, and great bastions, and vaulted arches, by which fortresses are entered, and by which, also, whether you come from above the river, or from below, or across the bridge of boats from Neusatz, the interior of this little fortress-town has to be gained. In the most deserted and neglected fastnesses my imagination involuntarily supplies at every turn figures of a romantic

nature: in this place it needs not to give itself any unnecessary trouble, the figures that complete the dark pictures are amply supplied by the forms of the prisoners confined in the prisons of the fortress.

As you enter they will meet your eye at every turn, in their coarse white dress, dragging their heavy chains between their legs, now working beneath some rock upon the repairs or improvements of the fortifications, guarded by two or three soldiers, who recline at a little distance, musket on arm,—now lying in a group, among stones and pieces of rock, to take a little respite of rest, and gazing in melancholy inertness upon the ground before them,—now conveying burdens along the narrow streets,—now carrying the necessary provisions up to the garrison, always accompanied by an escort. Many of the lesser criminals are allotted to the households of the different officers of the garrison, as servants and helpers; and such you may meet at every house-door or in every house-passage, still guarded by their inevitable guard, still dragging their inevitable chains.

Throughout the whole of the small town an eternal noise of the clanking of iron fills the air from sunrise to sundown, mixed with the rattling of

sabres or of spurs; it is incessant; and, to the stranger, this constant, dreary, grating sound of imprisonment, and hardship, and strife, conveys an oppressive and sickening feeling, to which, however, the inhabitants of the town become accustomed, until it passes entirely from their minds. I suppose with constant habit men's ears may get indifferent to the grating of the saw; for my part, I was never long enough in this dismal little town to forget this painful feeling for a moment. Do you feel, as I do, the deep melancholy instilled into the very soul by the ringing of bells? If you do, what effect would have upon you this continual ringing of chains, now close by your ear, now at a distance, now clear and harsh, now scarcely perceptible to the sense, but, of a surety, never ceasing?

The sight of the many diversified Austrian uniforms, that flit hither and thither, fails to bestow the least gaiety upon the aspect of the small streets, as colour generally does, or to remove the dark feeling that comes over you. And yet, when the dreary, heavy, encircling fortress walls, with their barred windows, and loop-holes, and breathing-holes, looking out upon unwholesome swampy moats, are once passed, there are broad green

avenues and alleys, and grassy spots, and open spaces in the small town, that elsewhere would, perhaps, give, what here they cannot, a cheerful aspect to the place.

In one part you come upon a little market-place skirted with fair houses; and this market-place is bright with groups of peasant wives with their wares of fruits and vegetables of all descriptions, glowing with rich colour: but yet, again, from this very spot, up the precipitous rock of the higher fortress or citadel, rises a covered gangway, higher and higher, like a great brown angular serpent, so dark and dreary-looking, that, as you gaze up its gaping mouth, along the lower flight of wooden stairs, you cannot but feel, in spite of the figures that animate it in moving up and down, that it must lead, although upwards, not downwards, to some fearful inferno or enchanter's cavern: and from this sort of black Jacob's ladder, from which no heavenly light pours down, on which no angel sets its foot, comes again and ever the clanking of iron, but with a still more melancholy and hollow reverberation. By its side stands the Catholic church of the town—the temple of peace beside the entrance to the abode of warfare and imprisonment. Will you venture to

mount with me the tortuous windings of this strange climbing wooden gallery? You will be repaid for your pains; for, upon emerging at last upon the platform summit of the rock to which it conveys, and where stand those large, white, barrack buildings, which I have told you look so ill at a distance, you will find on all sides from the walls of this elevation panoramic views, that make you forget, in the sight of nature's beauties, the saddening feeling the town below cannot fail to give.

Elevated views have always the effect of elevating the spirits; at least, I find it so. Generally speaking, let those who are accustomed to clamour loudly over their woes, go out into the great temple of nature, and into what insignificance will they feel their sorrows shrink: surrounded by the magnificence of heaven and earth, the wailing over every petty misfortune of life must appear like the puling cry of a child amidst the choral hymns and divine aspirations of the pious in an immense cathedral. And although the panorama from the summit of the fortress of Peterwardein is not one of those great and wondrous panoramas which strike the mind with awe, yet it has charm enough to make us forget the

fanciful feelings of sadness we have allowed to creep over us.

As the promontory on which the citadel stands commands an abrupt bend in the mighty river, we have views, on the one hand, of the stream with its many green and wooded islands, as it flows past the rich and lovely amphitheatre of the Syrmian hills and mountains—on the other, of its many windings, and vagaries, and deviations, and enlacing arms, so complicated that you have difficulty to trace its real course, as it rushes onwards through a wooded plain towards the Turkish frontiers: the whole scene is vast, grand, and abounding. To the south continues, beyond a platform of table-land, the amphitheatre of mountains so rich in luxuriant vegetation of forest. Before us lies the great, partially inundated plain, mottled here and there with woods; and below us, chained to the rock on which we stand by the bridge of boats, the spreading town of Neusatz, with its many churches, and its partial, but complicated, fortifications on the river's banks. I have been told much of the numerous subterranean galleries cut in the solid rock, which lie story above story, tier above tier, hidden in the bowels of the fortified eminence under our feet, most of which, it

seems, are constructed beneath the weaker defences, mine-fashion, in order to blow up unwary besiegers, and execute other fortification and strategic devices, and of an immense well which stretches from the upper fortress to far below the river's level, and of other strange, mysterious arrangements of subterranean excavation: but I have heard, also, of the weary and difficult task of threading all these dark passages for hours without any other result than seeing everlasting walls by torchlight; and I have declined this voyage of discovery. I thought the panorama I enjoyed far more worthy the lingering over during these hours; and so I cannot conduct you into this great labyrinth of gallery.

The town of Neusatz, which lies on the other side of the river, is of a long, rambling description, for the most part without that charm of green bowers, and orchards, and gardens, which is to be found in all the lesser Hungarian towns, that do not raise themselves above the pretension of being larger villages, and wearing a dull, semi-commercial, shop-keeping look in its wide straggling rows of low houses, which is tainted with a strong odour of Judaism, and for which I could find no sympathy. It is enlivened alone by its double allowance

of churches, the towers of which generally rise in diminishing cupolas one over the other, to meet the demands of the population of the double creeds.

German and Illyrian inscriptions seem to have almost entirely driven Magyar from the shop-door signs; and the names of the shop-keepers, if not unmistakeably German, end for the most part in the genuine Sclavonian "witsh," or "vics," or "vitz." It is said to be a thriving commercial town, in spite of its being scarcely more than a century in existence; and its situation on the Danube's banks, so near the great rivers of the Drave, the Saave, and the Theiss, is, probably, very advantageous to its prosperity. But, certainly, under its shade of German dulness, I should not have discovered this brilliant fact. I have acquaintances among the officers in the garrison there; and I can well believe the truth of their moanings, when they lament over the monotony of their lives.

LETTER XIII.

GIPSYING PARTIES AND EXCURSIONS.—THE SYRMIAN SWITZERLAND.—COMPANIONS.—MOUNTAIN MONASTERIES OF THE GREEK CREED.—A SPECIMEN OF THEIR GENERAL ASPECT.—GREEK MONKS.—THE MONASTERY WELL.—VIEW FROM A MOUNTAIN TOP.—THE SERVIAN FRONTIERS AND THE SAAVE.—RUSSIAN AGENTS AND INTRIGUES, SUPPORTED BY THE GREEK MONKS.—THE MILITARY FRONTIER: ITS ORGANISATION AND ASPECT.—EXCURSIONS TO VUKOVAR.—A COUNTY MEETING: GATHERING OF ITS MEMBERS.—ENVIRONS OF VUKOVAR.—INTERIOR OF A COMITAT'S-HAUS DURING A CONGREGATION.—ANIMATED SCENE.—STORM OF DEBATE.—CONFUSION OF TONGUES.—ANECDOTES IN CONNECTION WITH THE ABOLITION OF THE PUNISHMENT BY DEATH.—THE AFFAIRS OF CROATIA.—MEMORIAL ON THE SUBJECT ADDRESSED TO THE CONGREGATION.—DEPARTURE FROM VUKOVAR.—PROPOSED RETURN TO THE SYRMIAN HILLS.

COUNTRY life—that is to say, continental country life in *châteaux* and such like great mansions—necessarily infers excursion-making, or what some years ago we should have called in England "gipsying." There is supposed to be a great poetical luxury,

partaking deeply of romance, in sitting upon moist grass, in a very uncomfortable position, amidst ants, and "harvestmen" spiders, and centipedes, and gnats, and in eating a very uncomfortable dinner, served and partaken in a very uncomfortable fashion: this is a received opinion, and as such I must let it pass; and yet how often have I enjoyed the luxury of all this fancied poetry as a boy; but the illusions of pic-nics pass away in after days, along with a variety of other cherished illusions.

In spite of my still remaining inkling for "romance," for which, may be, you have more than once chid me, my own individual romantic soul can never now lift itself sufficiently, upon such occasions, from the earth and the earthly considerations of cramped limbs and caterpillars, to the proper pitch of romantic enjoyment: besides, without affecting any particular sensitiveness with respect to nature, however much I may be inclined to court her in all her various forms, I own I have a horror of seeing her beautiful face smeared with greasy paper, and puddings' ends, and broken plates, and scattered glass, and wetted bread; and whenever I see a bright green glade, from the skirting thickets of which stands forth,

perhaps, beneath the foliage of a massive clump of chestnut trees, some white stone cross, at whose feet the wanderer, surprised by night upon his rambles, might lie down and rest in peace, trusting for protection to the very sanctity of the spot,— whenever I see such a sweet sylvan retreat all tattered and draggled with the fag-end litters of cold veal or fowl, the same sickening feeling comes over as at the sight of a pretty face disfigured by an eruption of the cow-pox or the chicken-pox. I will say nothing, then, of such delightful gipsyings in the country round; but of this beautiful country I must say a word.

The picturesque scenery of this part of Hungary has earned for it the name of the Syrmian Switzerland, and not unjustly either; for, although there be neither glacier nor snow-capped mountain-tops among these lofty hills, yet there are scattered everywhere all the loveliest attributes of mountain scenery,—deep ravines through which descend cascading torrents, and hanging "devil's" bridges, and steep winding roads up the ravine sides, that now command behind you glimpses of the broad Danube and the plain beyond, now look down precipices, all tapestried with wild vines, and the thousand creeping plants of a southern

clime, now skirt the rushing mountain stream, now pass through thick woods of oak, and beech, and chesnut, now present a panoramic view of some elevated valley, surrounded by an amphitheatre of mountain-climbing forest,—in short, all that rich plenitude of beauty with which mountains, those aristocrats of the earth, will deck themselves, especially in so luxuriant a country, to the disadvantageous contrast of the humbler ground-tilling and commercial plains.

The villages of these mountainous districts are generally built on either side a gulf close against the hill sides, and connected in their sundered parts by wooden bridges over the stream that rushes in the midst. The structure of the houses is of that peculiar nature, in columned outer galleries and porticoes, which I have so often before described to you; and each stands separate, as usual, with its garden and wood. The aspect of the Ratzian mountaineers—unlike the usual pale Sclavonian type—is still more savage and gipsy-looking than the Magyar race; their swarthy features and long black hair contrasts still more strongly with their white full shirt-sleeves, (sometimes of Turkish tissue upon holidays,) and white spreading trowsers: a knot of them grouped, with

their instruments of labour in their hands, upon a precipice above your head, and glowering down upon you as you pass, startles you like a Salvator Rosa bandit picture. The women are no less oriental-looking; and their strange fashion of strings of coins hung about their neck or head, and glittering, on holidays, near their painted faces, gives them a peculiar air: how gay in colour will a few of them look, washing on the steps that lead from the village houses to the side of the mountain stream.

Among these diversified scenes, then, I have taken excursions, as I love to take them, with a fair companion, whose elevated feelings, romantic spirit, so admirably tempered with the strongest good sense, and never-failing amiability, would have rendered the dreariest path bright and gay, while they bestowed a double charm upon the lovely pictures that have shifted, like wondrous dioramas, before our eyes. We have had our pic-nics, too; but pic-nics as I love them again,—a basket of peaches, and apricots, and greengages for refreshment. And we have sat by the stream-sides, where the cascade rippled, not roared, while little Stephanie and the faithful Elie sought for flowers or wild fruits in the hills behind us, and when the

flowers were brought, to the poor child's dismay, flung them into the stream, to watch with superstitious augury what would be their fate, and what that of our wishes,—whether they would be dashed against some piece of shelving rock, and be lodged there to wither and die, or whether they would sail gaily down the torrent, out of sight, in spite of stone and eddy. But all this might have occurred elsewhere than in Hungary; and you recal me to my duty. I will, then, again take you with us on our drives to spots which may offer a more peculiar and certainly less personal interest.

Among these Syrmian hills are scattered, in various spots, several monasteries of monks of the Greek faith, which are invariably perched upon the most picturesque sites in the elevated valleys or mountain ravines. I am not willing to record the names of the several establishments of this nature which I have been to visit, as I have that to say of them, in general, which might appear as a special designation were they to be severally specified. I will only, then, take you to one as a specimen, in general detail, of the customary appearance of these mountain monasteries; I shall thus escape the charge of being personally invidious, and, at the same time, save you a world of trouble in

making my rounds with me from one to the other.

Fancy ourselves rambling up the road of one of the narrow valleys with which the low mountain line skirting the Danube is intersected. You may fancy us beyond the pale of any human dwelling in the romantic wilderness recesses of these hills. Perhaps the tinkling of a bell suddenly strikes upon our ear; and all at once, on emerging from an abrupt opening among the rocks and woods, we come upon a little elevated grassy plain, surrounded by an amphitheatre of thickly wooded hills; and at the further end of this glade stands a long pile of white buildings. It is one of these Greek monasteries. The architecture of the building is again of that heavy Byzantine nature which I have described in the Greek village church; and round exterior arches on its walls are similarly filled with bright fresco paintings of religious subjects; the large *façade*, which is to the right of the building as you advance along the sward, is surmounted at each extremity by towers of that oriental-looking terraced-cupola description which we have before seen in the Greek churches; the towers are massive, and give a certain appearance of richness and grandeur to the whole pile.

Opposite to the *façade* stands, apart, a small chapel, apparently of a still more ancient date than the rest of the monastery; for probably the monkish building had been devastated in former days by the Turks, while the chapel was spared, to be used, perhaps, as a temporary mosque: the arches of its windows are low and gloomy-looking; that above the low doorway is painted gaudily—refreshed, it seems, but lately—with a picture of the saint to whom the chapel is dedicated. From beneath this chapel rushes a mountain stream,—the chapel is built over it bridge-fashion,—which, skirting the wooded hills to our right, escapes down the ravine by which we have ascended. Behind it rises a plain building, attached to it on the further side, and destined, probably, as a sort of *hospice* for wanderers or visitors to the monastery. In the middle of the sward roams, perchance, a Greek monk,—Greek, that is to say, in religion, although probably a Ratzian, or may be a Wallachian by birth,—in all the picturesque solemnity of black *talar*, bound by purple scarf, gold chain and jewelled cross upon his breast, and flowing black beard: another, perhaps, reclines in shady meditation upon a sloping bank of turf, beneath a spreading catalpa: a third sits before the monastery portal, on a stone

bench, seemingly absorbed in a huge volume, that lies upon his knees.

Thus, exactly thus, did I first see one of these spots. These several figures scarcely seem to animate the scene, so complete is its apparent stillness; they bestow upon it only a greater effect of meditation and repose, although they certainly throw a sort of fanciful charm upon the romantic picture thus suddenly conjured up before our eyes in their mountain solitudes. As we advance along the glade to the monastery gate, we shall be gravely greeted by these anchorites with an air of humility, which almost borders on servility; but, at the same time, take my word for it, in spite of this apparent apathy, we shall be scrutinised by a sharp look of curiosity, that will gleam from under the sunken lids of their dark eyes, the prevailing expression of which is that of cunning and intrigue—an expression so characteristic at once of the Greek and of the monk.

If we enter the great portal of the monastery, we shall find ourselves in a large square court, surrounded by heavy colonnaded galleries, from above which the low, arched, cell windows of the monks look down. Wide as it is, it has a gloomy, strange, mysterious look about it, which is much

enhanced by a huge canopied well, the heavy stone parapet of which is gained on four sides by flights of steps. The waters of this well are said to have a peculiar charm, and popular superstition gives them a magical power; those who drink of them thrice are supposed to see their true-lovers in a dream, or to have their first wishes accomplished, or—I know not what—probably very much what you please. They are supposed, also, to be of a peculiarly healing power; and, probably, this latter supposition is encouraged by the monks, for the advantage that may accrue to their treasury from the offerings of those who make a pilgrimage to these waters, in order to be cured of their ills. In fact, they may possibly contain mineral qualities that really may be of service in some cases of disease; but when I pulled myself a bucket of the water and drank of it, by means of the metal beaker attached by a chain to one of the columns of the heavy canopy, on my first visit, I found it tasteless: nor, although, to please the fancy of my fair companion, I drank the necessary three draughts, did I see any one at all worth seeing in a dream, or find any of my numerous fanciful castles in the air built by its influence, or, in fact, experience any other result than a very

disagreeable sensation of coldness, for many minutes more than was pleasant, about the region of the stomach.

But now let us pass on through the orchard, on the other side of the monastery, and climb the pathway of the glen that leads up through rich woods to the summit of the mountain. The road is tolerably long; but when we gain the partially bald space that crowns the mountain, we shall have an immensely wide view before us to the south. At the foot of the mountain, or rather of the hills that skirt its base, lies an extensive plain mottled with wood, and village, and farm: the far, far horizon is skirted by a long range of mountains, grey and dim in the great distance: the further extremity of the plain is faintly marked by a white streak, now lost to the eye, now again re-appearing to sight, and barely visible to us where we stand. That streak of light indicates the course of a river; that river is the Saave—the stream that divides the kingdom of Hungary from the provinces of the Turkish empire.

Those distant mountains are the mountains of Servia—of Servia, the theatre of so many conflicting interests and intrigues; and at this sight the recollection will come over us of the reports

which we have constantly heard, and the truth of which we have every reason to believe, that the monks of all these Greek monasteries among the Syrmian hills are the ready instruments of Russia, and that they never let slip any occasion to forward the interests of the Russian government in any of the neighbouring lands of the Turkish provinces—that they here stand, in fact, as moral sentinels to watch over those interests—the interests, they fancy, of their own church also—which to Russia, the self-elected and ambitious head of that church, are a matter of so much political moment. Whatever may be the ulterior designs of Russia, whether it really aims, as is supposed, at a union, in some future time, of all the various countries speaking the various Sclavonian dialects, and more especially all those holding to the Greek faith, in one vast Greco-Sclavonian empire,—and certainly the Russian intrigues that are carried on also in Croatia, which is Catholic, and the Russian party which avowedly exists in that part of Hungary, go far to confirm this supposition,—whatever be the end and aim of the manœuvres that are so diligently employed,—a subject upon which, I must again say, it is not in my province or capacity to enter,—certain it is, that Russian agents, avowedly

despatched in the interests of these Greek communities by the head of their church, but unavowedly, yet evidently, engaged in far other intrigues, are constant visitors in the monastic establishments among the Syrmian hills: they come and go, it is not very clear whence or where; that they have been often smuggled over the frontiers into the Turkish provinces, and especially Servia, is a well-known fact. We may look upon our picturesque friends the Greek monks, then, in no other light than as so many Russian spies, agents, and intriguers.

I have already said, in a former letter, that Russian intrigue is continually at work to inoculate Russian opinions among the population adhering to the Greek faith; and that not only the monks, but the Greek priests disseminated through this part of the country, are said to be more or less devoted to the interests of Russia. It must be remembered, also, that we are here in the stronghold of the Greek religion in Hungary; and Carlowitz, which I shall probably see *en passant*, a town of considerable extent lying on the Danube at no great distance below Peterwardein, is the residence of the Greek metropolitan archbishop in the country, possessing, besides the arch-

bishop's palace and the Greek cathedral, a Greek theological college.

But, after all this grave discourse, from which I leave you to draw what conclusions you will, let us again descend from our mountain summit, and, after another glimpse at our picturesque monastery, wind our way down the lovely mountain roads to the Danube's banks, and so homewards. There is still another curious consideration attached to this border country, to which I must call your attention.

This same long, and comparatively flat, tract of land, which runs between the Danube hills and the Saave, constitutes a part of that district skirting the whole, long, bordering line of the Turkish provinces, denominated the military frontier of Hungary, which forms one of the strangest characteristics of this part of the country. The fortress of Peterwardein, in our neighbourhood, marks, here, the outskirts of this curiously constituted region, the whole of which is subjected to a system of military organisation, and ruled by military discipline, some few of the more principal towns lying within its bounds, such as Neusatz or Carlowitz, being alone exempted from the military duties attached to the rest of the frontier

region, in order that they may not suffer from such a drawback to their prosperity in a commercial point of view.

Instituted in the sixteenth century as a defence against the incursions and aggressions of the Turks, this great and extensive system of military organisation along the whole of the Hungarian border has been continued, augmented, and still more powerfully organised since, not only for the purpose of forming a constantly existing cordon to protect the country from all contact with the plague when it rages in the Turkish provinces, and, at the same time, a permanent custom-house force to prevent smuggling, but perhaps, also, as a pretext for sustaining eternally a great military force, which — as the military colonist inhabitants of this region are no ways Hungarian, either in language or sympathies, and entirely well-disposed to the ruling power of Austria—would ever be ready to restrain any movement which might take place among the discontented in Hungary.

The whole government of this district is of a military rather than a civil nature; the discipline in the interior of the immense families that people it is military discipline; the obedience of the younger branches to the head of each house is

military obedience. There is thus a species of patriarchal air almost scriptural, or rather oriental in its nature, pervading the several families of these border soldier-farmers, which is not without its peculiar charm. The patriarch himself is represented in almost every family by the sturdy head of a numerous race of descendants, who, exempted by his advanced age from the general military duties, watches over the interests of the household and farm belonging to each border family, allots the portions of work to be performed by each member of the little colony, and superintends the agricultural labours of those who may happen not to be employed upon their military duty as border sentinels—a duty which every male, capable of bearing arms, is obliged to perform in his turn, from his eighteenth to his sixtieth year. At the same time, this head of the family, although he commands in his own household, is subjected, in turn, to the controul of the military officer, who commands, rules, regulates, judges, acts as magistrate in fact, in each group of farms which constitutes a village or a town; this officer, again, in turn, is placed under the orders of the military general, who commands each district of this widely extended region.

Along the whole line of the frontier is constructed an uninterrupted chain of posts, consisting of guard-houses, sometimes built of solid materials on the mountain heights or in the skirting valleys, sometimes only of logs of wood thatched with rushes, and raised upon wooden posts, like the cabins of some of the Indian savages, above the swampy, and frequently inundated flats that stretch along parts of the river's banks. At each of these posts is stationed a well-armed guard of four or five men: a sentinel is always on the look-out; and, by night, a constant communication is kept up between them by patrols. An arrangement is also made, that, in case of any necessity for the whole body being called together, an alarm may be given from post to post by bells, and shots, and beacon-fires; and thus, in a short space of time, an immense army of highly disciplined troops may be assembled at the command of the Austrian rulers of the land. To aid these borderers in their duties, there has been organised, also, an aquatic battalion of considerable force, which is constantly cruizing up and down the Hungarian border rivers, the Danube, Saave, and the Theiss, in small armed galleys.

Our excursions have sometimes been extended

towards the interior of this military region; but I cannot say that any characteristics of this curious military organisation met my eye in any outward form of peculiarity, that could excite my curiosity or my interest. The country through which we passed was diversified with savage-looking hill and dale; the villages were, perhaps, a thought neater than those of the Ratzian populations to which I have been lately accustomed; there was, perhaps, also, here and there, that undefinable air of order and arrangement, which I had been told to look for, or otherwise should not have remarked: but, had it not been for the recurrence now and then of the simple brown uniform of the armed borderer as he took his way to his post as sentinel, or returned to his home at the expiration of his service, or the challenge of a village sentinel or two as we drove home after sundown, I should have had no idea of the strange military discipline to which the whole country was subjected. It would have been necessary, perhaps, to have penetrated still further into the interior of this border region, to have studied the originality of manners which must necessarily belong to this system of organisation, to have visited more narrowly the villages, and witnessed the interiors of families and

all their curiosities of patriarchal habits, to have made myself friends among the borderers, in fact, and found myself at home with them, in order to have gleaned matter for interest that might have repaid the curious investigation. But for all this I was left neither time nor leisure. Who knows, however, whether my capricious destiny may not lead me to these border regions once more hereafter, to study manners, hunt up pictures, and gather elements of romance! For the present, I must apologise to you for all this dry remark; but yet I could not let this strange country, so near and about me, pass without a few words.

During my brief stay in this villa-*château* upon the Danube's banks, I have had occasion, however, to witness the "humours" of a congregation or county meeting, in the principal town of this comitat or county; and of that I will give you a somewhat more detailed account, before I close this letter. It is needless to you probably, as it is tasteless to me, to enter into any explanations about the Hungarian constitution as connected with the division of the kingdom into a certain number of *comitaten*, each of which has its directing council and its periodical assemblies, where not only the internal affairs of the county are discussed

and regulated, but all matters connected with the interests of the whole country at large are treated openly, previously to the communication of the ideas of the comitat upon "things in general," through its deputies, to the diet; so, without any further preliminary, I have only to say, that, having heard that one of these periodical assemblies was about to be held at Vukovar, the chief town of Syrmia, and that animation enough was to be expected in its debates to afford matter of interest, excitement, and amusement to the foreigner, I steamed back again, on the day previous to the meeting, a short distance up the Danube, with a friend, in order to be present upon this occasion. I had never witnessed such a scene, and I was anxious to see something of a congregation gathering.

We had a crowd of persons on our steamer, bound to the same destination; and our procession, as we landed on the strip of land on which stands the steamer office, and then crossed an arm of the river in boats to the main shore, was of most respectable dimensions.

The pleasant capital of Lower Sclavonia wears the usual Hungarian characteristics of separate houses, severed from each other by gardens, and of avenues of trees along the road-like streets. The

great *château* of the Count Eltz lined one side of the principal street with its heavy magnificence of architecture. A visit to the countess-mother had been a further inducement to me for this little journey; but, unfortunately, she was not at Vukovar. Among the other houses, a large ground-floor-dwelling, built after the fashion of the Roman houses of Pompeii, round an inner covered court, much attracted my attention by its novelty, or rather antiquity of architecture, and astonished me afterwards, when I visited the interior, by the *commodiousness* of its arrangements. Otherwise, the character of the whole town differed not greatly from most provincial towns in Hungary.

As we arrived, carriages of all kinds, from the travelling britzka to the covered cart, with horses as various, and harness as multifarious in its gradations of neatness, were hurrying hither and thither in the avenued street; and magnates and lesser nobles, and county officers, and clergy, or their deputies duly appointed, were pointed out to me among the gentry, who mingled animatingly along with hussars, and pandours, and peasants, all in the greatest varieties of gay costume; and greetings, and hand-shakings, and kissings of stout-bodied mustached and bearded Hungarian gentle-

men might be witnessed at every turn. Every corner in every house, where a bed could be *improvisé* more or less comfortably, was occupied, I was told, by this sudden influx into the town. Of course, the foreigner was well provided for by the hospitality of his Hungarian host, whoever else might suffer.

The evening was already closing in when all the preliminaries of bestowal were settled; but there was time for a walk to the pleasant meadows, skirted with fair wooded hills, behind the town, and along the climbing path which led to a pretty pilgrimage chapel, on a spot called Dobra Woda, (*i. e.*, in Sclavonian, "Good Water,") among the hills. The sun was setting charmingly as we rambled along these agreeable paths, escorted by a few devout peasants, to the pilgrimage shrine; and I had forgotten all the strife of parties, and the debates of the morrow, as we returned, soothed by the lovely evening air, to our host and our merry supper-table.

The next morning, however, recalled me to the purpose of my journey. The proceedings of the congregation were to commence at an early hour; and, shortly after the time appointed, the great hall of the low, plain, white-washed building,

shaded by trees, which claims the dignified title of *Comitat's Haus*, or county-hall of the capital of Syrmia, was thronged by an animated crowd. In a semicircular recess, opposite to the entrance door, and in the middle of the wall occupying the breadth of the apartment, was placed a horse-shoe table, at the extreme convex point of which sat the Vice-gespann, or deputy-lieutenant of the county, as president, in the absence of the Ober-gespann. On his right hand were ranged the different officers employed in the discharge of the duties of the comitat; on his left the magnates, or superior titled nobility, together with the clergy; while the concave side of the table was occupied by such of these more privileged personages who could not find places at the upper. In various directions about the hall, either standing in groups, or seated upon benches, or leaning against the walls, in chance confusion, were the inferior nobility, of various degrees of wealth or respectability, many of whom appeared to the eye rather fitted to the title of "clown" than that of "gentleman," in the sense of the French word "*gentilhomme*," although all alike had a right to bear a voice in the affairs of the county, and consequently, indirectly, in those of the country at large.

In most parts of Europe, a scene of this description might possess very little of the interesting, and still less of the picturesque; but in Hungary the case is far different. On every occasion of more or less ceremony, in every case, more especially, where the national spirit is called forth, or the nation at large is concerned, the Hungarian assumes, if not the entire national costume, of greater or lesser richness, such as you may have seen it at foreign courts, at least some of the parts and attributes of this costume. Throughout the whole of the hall, consequently, were only to be seen the long frock-coat, more or less richly braided and embroidered, the flat cap, here and there of fur, here and there adorned with the usual Hungarian straight bushy plume, or with a group of heron's feathers, and sometimes, also, the tight pantaloons and tasselled boots—each of these costumes appearing to be cut and fashioned, and braided with or without colour, according to the taste or whim of the wearer. Throughout the whole hall, also, was to be heard the constant rattling of spurs, and clanking of the sabres, which were attached to the side of every person present, with the exception of the robed clergy. In such attire, and with such an accompaniment to every movement, the whole as-

sembly had so much of that bold martial air which is so characteristic, in general, of the Hungarian, and to which the mustache, worn by all alike, young and old, excepting again the clergy, and generally wire-drawn at the tips with such an air of resolution, contributed no little, that it was difficult to imagine that the meeting was one of a pacific, and not of a military nature.

The word "pacific" must not, however, be understoood by you in too extended a sense; for, after the proceedings of the day had been opened in customary form by his honor the Vice-gespann, and the attention of the assembly had been directed to certain affairs connected with the internal regulations of the comitat, a storm appeared rapidly to break over the whole assembly. To judge by the vivacity and ardour with which the confused discussion was carried on, and the animated and eager faces of the various speakers, who sprang up one after the other, scarcely allowing the previous speaker to utter his last syllable, and speaking sometimes two or three, nay, five or six, at a time, in spite of the reclamations of the president, personal interests seemed to have no little to do with the subject under discussion. . How the disputes in question terminated, or how any busi-

ness was brought to a conclusion in the midst of the increasing storm of wrangling, during which, if the voices formed the thunder, the flashing of the sabres may have been supposed to represent the lightning, so often did they appear, from the animated gestures of the disputants, to be about to leap from their scabbards, in order to bear a part in the debate, may be a matter of some difficulty to solve. But you may guess how much all this confusion was increased by interruptions arising from sources not usually connected with popular debates, but incidental to the peculiar circumstances in which Hungary is placed.

I have already told you elsewhere that, until lately, Latin was not only the language used in all legal and official affairs, public and private, but also the language of open debate in public assemblies; and that, in latter years only, the newly awakened national spirit had, in spite of the most violent opposition, introduced the Magyar tongue, as well in the debates of the diet, as all other public affairs. This practice has spread and prevailed to the almost utter exclusion of Latin; although it is regarded with an evil eye by old conservatives, as a "new light," originating from the liberal party, and more especially by the

priests, who, somehow or other, connect their interests, and the maintenance of their privileges, with the maintenance of the Latin tongue, particularly in such *comitaten* as this, where the Sclavonian—the Illyrian—is the language of the people, if not of the upper classes, and not the Magyar. And on this occasion, in the midst of the discussion in Magyar, lo! there rises from his seat a stately priest, who protests energetically against the use of that tongue, on the plea that the gentleman who is speaking is well known to be excellently versed in Latin, and that Latin, consequently, he ought to speak and *must* speak. The orator, however, appears to be inflated, for the moment, with the national spirit, and insists on giving vent to his feelings in the national tongue: but now the whole priestly band gets up, as one man; a sympathetic clamour arises from the robed part of the assembly; the Latin is insisted on, partly as a right, partly as a custom; the ecclesiastical conservatives are known to be obstinate and unyielding;- and so, after an infinity of time lost in hubbub and confusion, the orator gives way with a very sulky air, and cuts his speech short with a few words of Latin. Scarcely less is the expostulatory uproar, when a young

count, recently arrived at his estate, and come for the first time into the country, rises and speaks in German! Now it is the turn of the national party to shew their spirit, and reproach the young innovator with this transgression of all national feeling. The young count confesses, somewhat shamefacedly, it is true, that he has been brought up in Vienna, that he has travelled in France, Italy, England, no matter where, but never at home—in fact, that he cannot speak his mother-tongue. The assembly gives way, for every one understands German, little as it may be loved; but there is a sneer of pride or of contempt upon the top of the curl of many an Hungarian mustache; and a fidgety whispering of dissatisfaction prevails, until the young count says out his say, and again sits down.

By degrees, as the attention of the assembly was turned to other matters, the energy and uproar subsided into apathy and calm. By what means, or for what end and purpose, I never knew, or I have forgotten if I was told, the subject of the law of punishment by death, the abolition of which is a favourite topic with the liberal party in Hungary, also came forward; and I was told, during a quiet debate, which, were it not for

the great emphasis used, (as is always the case in oratory, for which the Hungarian has an extraordinary inborn talent, and to which the Magyar tongue is admirably adapted, but even in common conversation,) would have had the air of very friendly chit chat upon the subject, the tale of the circumstances which led to the rejection of the bill presented to the last Hungarian diet for the abolition of the pain of death, at the moment that there appeared every prospect of the victory being gained by the liberals, and the bill being carried through. Here you have it in as succinct a form as possible.

One of the members of the table of magnates suddenly disappeared from the meetings of the diet at Presburg; but, as his hussar—his servant—was seen daily waiting for him in the anti-rooms, with the national costume, which every magnate and deputy dons before entering the assembly, no importance was at first attached to his absence. Chance at last led to the discovery that he had been murdered and cut in pieces, and that his limbs had been thrown into the Danube: from discovery to discovery,—from petty indication to more glaring evidence,—it was at length proved that he had been assassinated by his own hussar. Brought to

a confession, the murderer avowed that he had committed the deed for the purpose of appropriating to himself a large sum of money, at that moment in his master's possession, but with the confident expectation, if detected and convicted, of being released after ten years' imprisonment—the term of punishment fixed by the new bill—and being then able to enjoy his ill-gotten gains for the rest of his life, since, while waiting for his master in the lobbies of the diet-hall, he had heard the discussion upon the bill for the abolition of the punishment by death, which he had no doubt, he added, would pass the house and rescue him. The wretched man deceived himself; the bill did not pass, (this event immediately changing the whole aspect of affairs, and giving a great power into the hands of the party opposed to the bill,) and the assassin was executed.

Among other matters which also came to discussion before the congregation, was one of a nature so peculiar to Hungary, in the circumstances of its want of union among the many tribes and nations which compose its whole, and touching, also, in some degree, upon a subject to which I have already alluded in this letter, that I will assail you with a few words about it.

I have already told you that the young liberals and ultra-liberals of Hungary have lately taken the fancy into their heads, to compare their position with regard to Austria to that of Ireland with regard to England; while, strange to say, Croatia, at the same time, or rather the opposition party in that most unsettled and dissatisfied Hungarian province, takes up exactly the same line of comparison in its own relations with Hungary: and just as much as liberal Hungary has its O'Connell—perhaps its two or three—to set up against the efforts of the royal or Austrian party, has Croatia its own pet O'Connells to set up against the pretensions of the Hungarian or national party in its own land. You will think, probably, that these good ultra-liberals are rather behind date in their choice of a model hero; but no matter. Now, whatever the ulterior designs of the opposition party in Croatia,—which, open or secret, seem often so confused and contradictory, that it would be difficult to discover or determine them,—the great subject of debate, upon which the whole source of discord is made to appear to turn, and which is taken up as the rallying point between the two parties in opposition, is, whether the Croatian government, in

its official communications with the superior Hungarian authorities or with the diet, should be permitted to make use of its own language, or should be obliged to use the Magyar.

The efforts of the Hungarian party in Croatia —which, by the way, is the prevailing one—tend to establish, as far as possible, a community of nationality with the principal country, and the absorption, sooner or later, of the different races into one more strictly united kingdom: and the community of language is chiefly insisted upon as the great means to that end. The tendencies of the opposition party or parties are subdivided, however, into a variety of confused designs: one faction appears to desire the separation of Croatia from Hungary, and its national independence as a distinct state; another seems to aim at the same secession from Hungary, but in order to effect a closer union with Austria; a third, less open, however, in the expression of its designs, advocates the scheme at which I have already hinted,—a scheme, the propagation of which may be again traced to the instigation of that great fomenter of all similar ideas, ambitious and intriguing Russia, —a scheme, the thought of which, however vaguely or faintly expressed, may be found to exist

among all the Sclavonian tribes, whether to the north or south of the Danube,—the scheme, namely, for the final union of all the countries speaking the many idioms of the Sclavonian language into one vast empire: and to all these parties the maintenance of their language in all official communications is looked upon as an object desirable to their own purposes. Under these circumstances the virulence of party faction in Croatia is extreme; and it is not more than two or three years ago, that blood was shed in torrents in the streets of Agram, during a violent fray, which, although it may have arisen from a misunderstanding or an accident, as is said, may be traced, in its origin, to the strife of these contending factions.

The fanatical leader of the archi-Sclavonian, so called national, but it might be termed Russian, party, was, until very lately, a young Count Nugent, one of the sons of the Austrian general of that name, Irish by birth: latterly, however, it would appear that the lustre of this would-be repealer has been somewhat dimmed, as such lustre will be dimmed sometimes, and his name of no more such renown among his party. The chief of the Hungarian party is a certain Antony Joszipovics, a man, it would seem, of but little

education, but of a rude and passionate eloquence, who has obtained a great hold over the majority in the Croatian meetings and debates.

And, now, to return to my congregation at Vukovar, it was against this same advocate of the Hungarian national-concentration system, that the Sclavonian party in Croatia addressed a memorial to their brethren, in language, of Syrmia, complaining of his "manœuvres and intrigues" in the land, and calling for combined aid and assistance against him in their future attacks upon him in the diet or elsewhere.

It did not appear to me, however, that the "brethren in language" of the Sclavonian comitat of Syrmia took the matter very warmly to heart, or seemed much inclined to make much stir in Croatian affairs. The eternal "language question" had been, probably, too often discussed among them, and left in the same doubt and perplexity in which it had been found, to excite any novelty or interest, or any animation, beyond that in which I had seen them personally engaged on a similar subject. As an incidental picture of the confused state of Hungarian relations and politics, it was, perhaps, a matter of interest to me, the foreigner, alone; and, as such, I have ventured to lay it before your

eyes. But, during these matters, as the proceedings of the congregation appeared to be approaching a *bathos* of calm, which amused me but little after the stormy commencement, I left the *comitat's haus.*

The assembly separated afterwards at a tolerably early hour. The stranger was entertained with all the usual zeal of Hungarian hospitality during the day. In the evening his honor the Vice-gespann had, probably, his whist party, as in any other civilised land: affairs were debated in coteries; and some, perhaps, prepared their efforts of eloquence for the morrow. I had seen, however, enough of the "humours" of an Hungarian congregation to satisfy my curiosity; and I took the evening steamer to return to Kammenitz.

I now depart upon my further voyage down the great river; but, as I understand that the vintage in these lands is a sight worth witnessing in this vine-growing and wine making country, I intend stopping once more at the villa-*château*, on my journey back up the Danube, to be a spectator of the vine-harvest, which will take place about the period of my return.

LETTER XIV.

BY LAND FROM PETERWARDEIN TO SEMLIN.—CARLOWITZ.—THE GREEK CATHEDRAL.—A FANATIC.—ASPECT OF SEMLIN.—PASSPORT AND LAZARET REGULATIONS.—DISTANT VIEW OF BELGRADE BY MOONLIGHT.—TRANSPORT FROM SEMLIN TO BELGRADE.—ASPECT OF BELGRADE FROM THE RIVER.—ORIENTAL SCENES.—THE CAPITAL OF SERVIA.—A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE REIGNING PRINCE.—THE NEW TOWN.—THE INTERMEDIATE TOWN UPON THE FORTRESS HEIGHT.—THE FORTRESS.—ITS APPROACH, AND ITS INTERIOR.—THE PACHA'S STUD AND HUNGARIAN COACHMAN.—ANECDOTE OF THE PACHA OF BELGRADE.—THE OLD TURKISH TOWN.—A MOSQUE.—THE TURKISH BATHS.—LAST WORDS.

As there is but little scenery or matter of interest on the Danube's banks between Peterwardein and Semlin, I accepted the advice of my friends to proceed by land to the latter town, and thus gain time to pay a visit to Belgrade, which place, although I had seen the capital of Servia two years before, I was anxious to ramble over once again, at more leisure than the customary delay of the steamer at Semlin would have afforded

me. The companion of my journey, thus far, was agreeable and intelligent, and amply made up, by anecdote and information, for any lack of excitement in the aspect of the country through which we passed.

For a time after descending from the height of Peterwardein, our way lay up hill and down dale, along the Danube's banks, through a country partly wooded with masses of luxuriant foliage on the heights that skirted the river, partly covered with rich green vineyards. On all sides were spots where tales were to be told of Turkish invasion, and struggles of the Imperialists with the Turks,—where camps were pitched, where skirmishes, with all the varying chances of war, were fought, where battles took place, where heaps of dead were left upon the now laughing green field; for the earth will forget its misery and its bitterness, as the heart of man will, in time, forget its sorrow, and suffer a smile of gaiety to steal over the face, which once was bathed with tears of blood, and smeared and wrinkled with carnage and death. In one spot to the left of our road was an old *old* chestnut-tree, on which an Imperialist general had been hung by the Turks: close by it stood a small low chapel. The Christian hero of these tales of

war is invariably the Prince Eugene, who at the early commencement of the eighteenth century, succeeded the Margrave Lewis, of Baden, as vanquisher of the Mussulman.

A pretty winding ravine, all overhung with teeming vineyards, brought us from the hill which we had been skirting down to Carlowitz, upon the river's banks—a town which I have already mentioned as the residence of the Greek archbishop in the Austrian dominions. There was nothing remarkable in this rambling town, beyond the compact structure of its ill-paved streets,—a circumstance unusual in Hungary,—and the heavy ecclesiastical buildings attached to the archbishopric. I left the carriage to enter the cathedral, which occupied one side of a small open space. It was a low edifice, full of that gaudy splendour which characterises the Greek churches, with the usual screen, all adorned with bright flowery arabesques and pictures of saints upon gold grounds, and a burnished filigree-work entrance to the sanctuary, but half-obscured by that dim gloominess which induces devotion and prostration of spirit, and is rather the attribute of our gothic Catholic churches, than more modern Greek places of worship. A strange being, with streaming black hair and wild eyes,

followed us into the cathedral, and endeavoured, with the exuberant gesture and the screeching voice of a maniac, to point out its beauties and its merits, at the same time as the beauties and the merits of the Greek faith,—"the one, the holy, and the true," as he denominated it. From his well-worn shabby-genteel attire, in that common European costume which we are accustomed to call the dress of "gentlemen," I took him for the established cicerone of the building; but he repelled my proferred *trinkgeld* with an inclination of his body backwards, which had nigh prostrated him on the pavement, in a position the very reverse from the usual form of Greek prostrations: my companion imagined him, very erroneously it appeared to me, to be a Russian "observer," who assumed this guise to allure men into discourse with him: to me he appeared no more nor less than a fanatic.

Beyond Carlowitz, our carriage ascended a barren mountain road, until we reached an elevated plain, across which the rest of our journey lay. This plain was dreary in the extreme, much like one of those elevated flat lands that lie along sea-side cliffs, and giving one the impression, every moment, that very shortly a view of the broad sea must

burst upon the eyes: it was barely diversified, here and there, by a barren sunburnt glen, or a gully with a scanty stream, or a patch of wood in the distance. Now and then, a border village, with its long line of granary, stocked for a time of need, and guarded by a sentinel in the usual brown border uniform, was passed; but these villages contained little that characterised them from other Hungarian villages, except their air of excessive stillness and dreariness, perhaps on account of a great part of their male population being absent upon duty. At a village called "India,"—a strange Asiatic name, in the midst of these dreary tracts,—we changed horses; but it was not until we began to descend to the town of Semlin, and again, through the openings of our hilly road, caught glimpses of the broad Danube, and the minarets of Belgrade in the extreme distance, that our eyes were rejoiced by the slightest trace of the picturesque: and even this faint vision of beauty was lost as we entered Semlin, the last Hungarian town and Austrian stronghold on the right bank of the Danube; upon the left bank, until I reach the extreme limits of Hungary,—the limits also of my Hungarian voyage,—my journey has still much further to extend.

There can be no doubt, the moment you enter Semlin, that it is used solely as an Austrian garrison, and has little to do with Hungary or the Magyar race. The streets are those of an ill-built German town, agreeably diversified with that rambling, patched, shabby, uneasy look, that towns inhabited by a variety of races will assume, over and above the prevailing characteristics: in fact, the Magyar race is entirely lost in this border town; besides the German colonists and the Austrian garrison, it is inhabited only by Ratzian-Sclavonians, Servians from the other side of the Saave, wandered Greeks, a sort of mixed refuse population from all kinds of Turkish provinces, gipsies, and Jews. I put the Jews last in my list; for in that rank they seem to stand, even below the heathen gipsies in fact, in the estimation of the Christian populations. The hill by the side of which we descended to the town was mottled by miserable mud-built cottages, which seemed to be crawling like dirty snails up to the top, in order to climb the walls of a forlorn-looking ruin, probably of some fortress or entrenchment. The streets through which we drove, over a sort of rough pavement, evidently intended for the massacre of carriages and the breakage of legs, were wide,

empty, and mournful-looking: the lanes that lay to our left, towards the river-side, appeared like small ravines, choked with hillocky layers of caked dust, which winter or wet weather promised to transform into still more disagreeable mud-streams. A few market-women were sitting in an open space, as if playing at marketing, so deserted of all customers did they and their baskets appear. A few Austrian uniforms were dawdling languidly about, like so many scarecrows dressed in military attire, "to make-believe." This was the impression that saluted me on my first visit to Semlin—Semlin, which, in the romance of my boyhood, when I played over "the siege of Belgrade" in my imagination, I had pictured to myself as a bold, romantic, rocky fortress; and this impression was not changed for a better, as I the second time rattled through the streets of this renowned Austrian garrison. The dirty inn, built round a shabby, dirty court-yard, that was filled with dunghills, barn-door fowls, and rickety carts, to which we drove, as the great hotel of Semlin, was not of a nature to convey impressions more agreeable; and, altogether, Semlin dwells in my memory, as would dwell in it the filthiest of Irish farm-yards. If I do the place injustice, I am sorry for it: if any one else has

found in it charms which I did not discover, I am heartily glad of it for his sake.

One piece of good fortune, however, attended me at Semlin,—the meeting again with my agreeable Queen's courier,—him, if you recollect, of the offended nose, who had long since forgotten the offence, and of whose obliging manners, pleasant information, and amiability, I shall long retain an agreeable recollection: I wish you might find means of telling him so. Pray do not accuse me of allowing my own *amour-propre* to have seduced me into this eulogium, when I inform you that I found him reading with interest one of my last-born offsprings in "Maga," which met my eyes for the first time in letterpress attire: think what you will, *that* had nothing to do with my appreciation of his pleasant qualities. He was awaiting his turn to cross Servia towards Constantinople with dispatches, and had domiciled himself, with that comfort which an Englishman alone knows how to diffuse about him wherever he may go, in an hotel of minor pretensions to our wretched quarters, but far more agreeably situated, with open galleries round a garden-like court. He proposed to accompany us on our excursion to Belgrade on the morrow; and we all proceeded together to the

house of the commander of the garrison, which was situated in the wide main street, leading to the half-fallen wooden gate of the town, to arrange about passport regulations and permissions, and other lazaret matters of form, for the purpose of crossing over into Servia. This was an affair—I ought to note the fact with a hundred marks of admiration, since it has to do with the regulations of Austrian authorities—of very easy and speedy accomplishment; all the usually tedious paper writing and stamping, and signing and countersigning, was gone through with marvellous expedition.

Fortunately, of latter years, that redoubtable monster the plague has withdrawn itself discreetly to so great a distance from the European possessions of the Turkish empire, as to have lost all its formidable appearance in the eyes of the *Königlich-kaiserlich-contumatz* on the confines of Hungary, and to have assumed only the form of a dim, airy, distant phantom, whose hand is powerless; the customary measures of precaution, consequently, have been allowed to diminish in their rigour, and are at present only observed in form, or as a sort of etiquette to keep the lazaret officers in practice. A flying visit to Belgrade is thus rendered an easy

matter to the traveller; and a peep into Turkey is as commodious an affair as a trip to Richmond to a Cockney. A boat also was ordered for the morrow.

When all these prĕliminaries were settled the evening had already begun to close in; and the sun had set when we wandered over intervening meadows to the banks of the Danube. But there was a glorious growing moon in the heavens, which glittered upon the expanse of the great waters. Before us it faintly relieved the border watch-huts on the other side of the river, raised upon piles above the marshy ground, in order to be out of the reach of inundations, with their ladder-like steps, and looking in the vague light very much like Chinese houses in the plates and washing-basins of our childhood. To our right rose high in the distance, against a deep blue spangled sky, the dark rocky fortress of Belgrade, with its shadowy minaret towers, starting up in every direction in tapering elegance against the bright background, out of black tufty groves, while lights sparkled like a distant illumination along the shore or from the fortress heights.

Although Belgrade lies on the same side of the Danube as Semlin, separated only from the land on which we stood by the Saave, the mouth of

which, as it pours into the Danube, we could not see, yet, from a peculiar bend of the river, and the intervention of a dark island between ourselves and the main body of the stream, it is almost impossible not to imagine that the capital of Servia lies upon the other bank; and it is with the greatest difficulty that you can get rid of this illusion, when standing on the quay of Semlin even by day: by moonlight it is complete. This dark profile of the Turkish town, thus lying like an *ombre Chinoise*, against the moon and starlit sky, appeared to us, as we thus stood upon European ground, like a fantastic airy picture of another land,—a *mirage* of the Eastern desert,—conjured up by enchantment before our eyes. We stood long gazing upon this sharply defined vision.

The line of posts of the stockade, which forms the only fortification of the frontier town, hid the low dirty houses behind us from our sight; it formed the walls of the theatre on which our phantasmagoric scene was represented: our seats were planks of wood: at our feet lay many dark boats by the bank-side, with little lights gleaming from under their low cabin roofs, severing our stage from us as might the row of lamps: the little green tree-frogs were singing in grand chorus in every

tree upon the river's banks, making so big a concert as to excite wonder how such little throats, however numerous, could send such volumes of sound forth upon the air; they were our orchestra. This fanciful and pleasant night scene was a prologue to us of the comedy we meant to act the next day—"A Peep into Turkey."

"A Peep into Turkey" may this visit from Semlin to Belgrade indeed be termed; for even the *flâneur* the best accustomed, like one of our intimate acquaintance, to the sudden changes in manners, customs, and appearances which salute him as he wanders from one country to another, can scarcely be prepared for the utter and complete change of scene that awaits the traveller upon merely crossing the Saave from Semlin to Belgrade. So striking is the contrast between the European aspect of the former town, and the Asiatic air of the latter, that, with the slightest touch of that imaginative mania of which every true *flâneur* possesses, or ought to possess, a grain or two, he must fancy himself suddenly transported by an enchanter's wand, from the heart of Europe, with its manners and its civilisation, into the midst of the gorgeously-coloured East, with all its strange contrasts of magnificence and desolation, of splen-

dour and barbaric dirt. The first time I skirted along the banks of the broad Danube, I had seen nothing of oriental lands; and as I crossed the mouth of the lesser Saave towards the Turkish town, I could not, in spite of the forms of the official Austrian boatmen with their German faces, and the lazaret officers who accompanied me, drive away the fantastic thought, with the picture of Belgrade before my eyes, that I was not being wafted over by a genius of the Arabian Nights.

Two years have somewhat modified this fancy, —what "cherished fancies" will not time wrinkle and disfigure with grey hairs, in spite of all the washes, and paints, and dyes, with which the inveterate self-illusionist will strive to bestow upon them a false air of youth?—and it was with a spirit somewhat tamed down from these airy genii flights, that I this time found myself in the boat provided for our transport over, with two agreeable companions, and the usual *contumatz*-officer *pro formâ*. And yet the morning was as bright, and glowing, and Eastern, even to scorching, as was necessary for such a flight; but, somehow or other, the spirit could not find its former wings. Two years' hard usage had clipped them somewhat; they flapped, but did not soar.

A few Turkish fishermen or traders, with a turbaned negro or two, were punting along the shore at Semlin, or unloading bales from a great wherry; and Tartars, in oriental attire, waiting, probably, for couriers, were squatting on their heels upon the banks of the river, as we stepped into our boat; for, as I said before, the sanitary restrictions had sunk, in the absence of the plague, into little more than a mere vain form: and, as they mingled strangely with friars, and soldiers in Austrian uniform, and a couple of tightly breeched Tyrolese, who came there I know not how, all lounging about the little muddy quay, they looked like janitors to the foremost portals of the East.

The pile-mounted and reed-thatched watch-houses of the border-guard, which stood, here and there, upon the marshy banks of the stream, that we skirted on the right of the Danube, and a border boat or two that passed us armed with their little pieces of cannon, moving along under the influence, partly of heavy sails, partly of their long oars, like small galleys, and filled with border uniforms, strove to remind us, for a time, that we had not quitted Austria, that is to say, European territory; but Belgrade lay there before our eyes, rising higher and higher upon the horizon, as our

transport boat glided down the stream towards it, with its bold fortress, picturesque and imposing in the distance, towering over a rocky promontory which advances abruptly into a bosom of the Danube, where it curves in order to receive, in due majesty, the waters of the Saave, one of its mightiest tributaries. The tall, slender, white minarets, which rise here and there out of grove-like gardens, and thick masses of cypress, and the flat roofs of the white houses, and the oriental domes that peep from among the trees, and the painted seraglio of the Pacha on the fortress-summit, with its protruding, open-work, roof cornices, over all the tumble-down misery of which distance—that clever reviver of so much degraded beauty—threw a veil, prepared us for a picture of the East, painted in strong colours by a vigorous hand.

By degrees, the more modern, Christian part of the Servian capital, which stretches up the Saave, as the old Turkish town stretches, on the other side of the fortress promontory, down the bank of the combined streams, rises more distinctly into observation, with its more European style of architecture, as we row across the wide mouth of the Saave that divides Hungary from the Turkish provinces: but yet the eye is fixed upon the

Turkish sentinels of the fortress-garrison, still occupied by a Turkish force; they may be seen studded, here and there, up and down, along the terraced fortification walls, either lounging slowly along the ramparts, or stationed, each under his umbrella-like little wooden and brightly painted covering, that serves as a sentry-box, if so it may be termed; and these strange, fixed parasols, a countless quantity of which seem to dart, like slender mushrooms, out of all parts of the walls, are again eminently Turkish in their fancy. It is true, that, as the boat approaches the shore, and comes closer upon the Servian quarter, where our party has to land, the Turkish part of the town vanishes entirely behind the height of the citadel; but then it glides past three or four Turkish fishermen, lying lazily in their punts, and fishing in the sun in their full oriental dress, and with their large white turbans. A number of Servians of all classes, in an attire not less eastern, although mixed with several distinctive attributes of the Greek costume, await us on the rude quay; two or three Mahomedan women, with their spreading white veils wrapped about their heads, so as to conceal all but their eyes, and falling over their dark tattered garments, stretch forth their dusky hands

to beg of the new comers as they land; Jews, Turks, and who knows what other infidels, mixed with Servian boatmen, shew their swarthy faces and their long beards on every side; and, in spite of the long European building of the Austrian consulate, and the line of hybrid-looking, ragged, make-believe, European houses that stretch along the bank, and endeavour to assume airs of European civilisation, the scene is still, to my imagination, one of the East.

These impressions still remained in tolerable force as we climbed a steep, stony street, amidst scenes that still preserved a tinge of orientalism, in the skirting lines of open shops, where oriental figures squatted before oriental wares, and strange, half-fallen sheds, forming dingy magazines for very dingy oriental manufactures, and other such crazy but romantic-looking buildings, which, with the help of the varied and gay Servian costumes, worn, also, by the women, add so greatly to the effect of the picturesque. Our first visit was to our amiable and intelligent British consul, who received us with that charming kindliness, which combines European courtesy with the ready hospitality of less civilised nations; and from him I learnt, to my dissatisfaction, that there

was no hope of an introduction to the Pacha at present in command of the Turkish garrison of Belgrade, since we were in the midst of the fast of the Ramazan, the severe religious duties of which rendered His Excellency, not, perhaps, too scrupulous, but far too much out of humour, to receive any visitors. This was a disappointment; as my visit to the Pacha in command, two years previously, had remained too amusingly impressed upon my memory, not to make me regret the impossibility of renewing such a treat; of this former visit I shall not be able to refrain from giving you an account in another letter.

I had another disappointment, also, in my hopes of paying my respects to the young Prince of Servia: his absence from Belgrade deprived me of this pleasure. Prince Alexander Georgewitch, or, to write his name more properly, "Kara-gjorjevics," that is to say, "the son of Black George," had been described to me as a fine-looking young man of kindly and excellent disposition, as well as of energy and resolution; and the romantic fate of himself, as well as of his father and family, had made me disposed to look upon him with much interest. It was his father, who, in the first Servian insurrection, had roused the Servians to ac-

tion, as their chief, and had first won for them that independence from Turkish rule, which, as a state governed by princes of its own, with the free exercise of its religion and all the other privileges of a free country,—if we except the annual payment of tribute to the Sultan, and the fact of the fortress still remaining in the hands of a weak Turkish garrison, as a matter of form,—it still preserves. His father was treacherously assassinated by the elder Prince Milosch, his rival in the command of the popular insurrection; and at this day, the tomb where his bones are deposited has become a pilgrimage shrine to the people, as that of a saint.

When the Milosches, both father and son, the first independent princes of Servia, had wearied the patience of all parties in the country to the uttermost,—the elder by his tyranny, the younger by his stupidity,—and caused themselves to be driven from the land, the people recalled to mind the son of their hero, Kara or Czerny, or, in other language, Black George, who had now grown into a man, and hailed him, by general acclamation, as their new prince. As a popular hero's son, I had formed in my mind's eye a sort of hero of romance out of the young prince; and you, who know me,

may guess that I "chewed the cud of bitterness" when I a second time found myself deprived of having an audience of him by his absence from Belgrade. There was nothing, then, to be done, but to resume my rambles about the Servian capital in every direction, and to pick up what sketches of its appearance or its "humours" I might find in my way.

In order that my first oriental illusions might remain at last, as a sort of *bonne bouche*, I requested my compañions to allow our steps to be first turned to the new or Christian part of the town, before visiting the old Turkish and more ancient portion. From the height of the citadel the more modern capital of Servia stretches down to the Saave, and towards the interior of the country, in the direction of those beautiful hills, among which so many historical events connected with the fate of Servia have passed in latter years, in the same way that the old town descends from the same height, but on the other side of the promontory, towards the Danube. In every direction of this part of the town, new buildings, constructed after European fashion and with European solidity, are springing up, and proclaim a rapidly increasing progress towards civilisation and a greater degree

of prosperity; although, to be sure, in the neighbourhood of the fortress height, many a very dandified new house, spite of its upstart airs and roof lifted in scorn to the sky, is obliged to join hands with a ragged neighbour, apparently in the last degree of debility and destitution. Towards the open country the white buildings are scattered with the irregularity of a flock of sheep upon a common; and this want of plan it may be, one day, found difficult to combine into a whole of any decent appearance: it has all the disorder of green impatience.

The new palace of the young prince, lying at a little distance from the town, upon an unfinished road, which may hereafter become a fine street, little as it has the appearance of it now, is well built, with some taste, and is not of that preposterous size which new sovereigns mostly ambition.

The new senate-house stands still further away towards the foot of the hills, and is also simple and decent, without any pretension to show or style: and this want of pretension I should have looked upon as a symptom of good taste, had not some good Servians vaunted to me these, their new European public buildings, as models of everything

that was magnificent. It is very probable that a few years may wipe out entirely the tint of orientalism which still colours here and there the Servian town: had I the least of any proper utilitarian spirit about me, I should say, "I hope so;" to you I say, "Alas! I fear so:" but keep my fancy to yourself, it would be, probably, very ill received, if heard by any Servian ears.

That part of Belgrade which occupies the slopes and the summit of the promontory height, on the extreme verge of which stands the fortress, may be looked upon as a sort of transition from the Christian to the Mussulman suburbs. In this portion of the town there still prevails that mixture of new and old, of progress and of desolation, of cleanliness and dirt, that is naturally to be expected in a town so lately rescued from barbarism and disorder. There is an amalgamation of European and Asiatic in this elevated centre of the town, which blends together without harmonising, and dovetails in bright and variegated bits, that give a not uninteresting patchwork-look to the whole place, and prepare the wanderer, as I have already said, for the transition from the one population to the other. By new houses, that might find their place in the greater suburbs of

Vienna or even Paris, stand windowless walls of houses of jealous Turkish structure: in one house is a gaping *porte-cochère ;* in the next a rickety wooden staircase leads outside to a still crazier-looking wooden balcony, wholly oriental in the forms of the open-work roof it supports. First you pass through a street of tolerably European aspect; then you crawl down a lane of scorching white walls, over which protrude fig trees and cypress trees, and other dark foliage, and from which hang down festoons of huge gourds with broad leaves, like big green turbans, so strangely placed, that you cannot but wonder how they ever managed to get on the top of the wall, and thus play truant into the desert passages on the other side. And now you come upon an open space, all up hill and down dale, with houses on the lower sides, looking as if they had lost their balance in the "see-saw" movement of the ground. Now you find an attempt at a modern shop: close by are the open sheds of an oriental town, displaying Turkish pipes, with their slim tubes, amber mouth-pieces, and gilded brown bowls, or shawls of Turkish embroidery, or gay oriental gold-threaded carpeting, or strange-looking sweetmeats and sugar-plums, such as astonished us by their mysterious com-

pounds in our childhood in the Arabian Nights, and stranger-looking cookery in the cookshops, and very odd cheese-cakes, probably made of pepper, as in the days of Berheddin Hassan, and grains and seeds of the tiniest, most fairy-like sort, probably "sesame," among them, and loaves that have only two steps to take from the oven to the shopboard, and embroidered slippers turned up at the points, and glittering vestments; but the dark, handsome vendors of all these wares, "good, bad, and indifferent," are Christian Servians, not Turks; although their gaily embroidered dresses, in spite of their being mixed, as I have said, with braided Greek jackets and vests, and their white turbans, and black beards, and flashing dark eyes, are Eastern in their aspect. But the oriental type is only served out to you piecemeal here; to grasp it in a more wholesale manner, you must descend into the old town, in which the original Turkish population still lingers.

Before taking this ramble, however, we determined to pay a visit to the fortress on our way. As the garrison is still Turkish, of course you may expect some more decided Turkish colouring in this remnant of Turkish rule; and, verily, you will not be disappointed, for the desert plain upon the height

before its entrance has every worst Turkish characteristic in a pre-eminent degree. Heaps of dirt are lying on every side, tainting the hot air; and large packs of unowned dogs are prowling about, either seeking a scanty subsistence in the masses of offal flung out upon this open space, or sleeping upon big dunghills, or lying immediately in your path, and allowing themselves, in a true Turkish spirit of apathy and fatalism, to be driven over by your carriage, or have their insecure tails trodden off, if you are on foot, rather than rise from their bare and dirty beds; and old Turkish women—the only part of whose faces, left visible by their folded veils shews bleared and wrinkled eyes, that give no great promise of charm under the rest of the ample covering—will beg from you as you go along. To be sure, the ill-made European uniforms of the Turkish soldiers, who are doing lazy duty as sentinels before the gateways of the fortress or on the old walls, consisting of blue jackets and very monstrously uncouth white pantaloons, in which the poor fellows, in spite of their amplitude, look very ill at ease, dispel in some degree, notwithstanding the red blue-tasselled caps upon their heads, the oriental ideas called up by the above-sketched picture of laziness and

dirt; but the whole scene, in spite of the offence given to a variety of your seven senses, is not unamusingly characteristic.

The massive outer walls of the fortress have still a solid and almost imposing appearance, spite of the ruin and dilapidation which is evidently taking place; but if you do not care to lose the brightness of the picture which distance from the river gave you, and know what is the real state of that noble-looking crown to the mighty rocky promontory of Belgrade, which we have admired from below, you must not venture to enter it. You are curious, perhaps; and I own to you so were we also; and although I had scattered all my illusions to the winds two years before, and the Pacha was not in a temper to receive us, we, nevertheless, penetrated into the interior to give it another look.

After passing over moats, and through great gaping gateways, and all the many windings and zigzag doings of fortifications in general, you arrive at the open space, upon which to your left stands the palace of the Pacha. It forms one side of a straggling shapeless court, full of all those fantastic varieties of hill and dale which we have before admired in the squares of the town; the other sides are filled with sheds for

stables, and indescribable wooden excrescences serving I know not for what, and a shabby-looking building, whilom whitewashed, and now chinked and cracked into a thousand fanciful fissures, crowned with a tapering minaret; this latter structure is the fortress mosque.

From the river this crowning residence of the Pacha has a gay, varied, and even handsome look; and it is scarcely possible to conceive the reality of the immense deception of your previous fancies—even Vestris on the stage compared with Vestris in the street, and without all the trick of stage adornment, could give but a faint idea of this wonderful transformation—when you thus stand inside the fortress, and look upon these ill-painted wooden walls, all blistered and chinked, these ill-attached, half-falling shutters, these unglazed windows, this dilapidated wooden roof that in parts is no longer a covering, these shambling deformed outer staircases, which look like the steps down a cliff side lately battered by a storm, these still more shaky outer galleries, to which the staircases would entrap the venturous and unwary visitor; in short, the general "tumble-down" appearance of the whole palace!

During the short visit we made, we did no more

on this occasion than take another peep into the mosque,—into which we were admitted without a scruple, and which displayed nothing further than plain whitewashed walls, dingily decorated near the roof, a small pulpit for the reader of the Koran, and a tolerably rich carpet for the prostrations of the devout upon the floor,—and make a visit to the Pacha's stud. In spite of their dilapidated lodging, the horses of the Pacha were very handsome, far superior to those of the previous Pacha, which I had seen two years before; in fact, the present commander of the fortress of Belgrade was a far more luxuriant and wealthy gentleman than the good, simple old general I had visited; and, instead of the one old wife and one child,—a fine boy, who has since died, I hear, to the intense grief of his poor father, whose pride he was,—he possesses a harem of some sixty wives and supernumeraries, of the extreme beauty of some of whom, Servian ladies, who are admitted to visit them, tell tales that tingle in the ears and hearts of Servian gentlemen and European consuls. The head coachman, who came to do the honours of the stud, was a fine dashing-looking fellow, dressed, bearded, shaved, and turbaned as a Turk; our astonishment, then, was not small

when he addressed us first in Hungarian, and then in German. In fact, he was an Hungarian by birth, who had been thirty years in Turkey; I believe, though, that he was a Mussulman only in dress and not in faith, for he sighed for his native land, as a true Hungarian, and talked of quitting his service to return to his native village.

Since our dashing Pacha was too cross-grained to admit us to his presence, I must strive to content you, instead of introducing you to him personally, by relating to you an adventure which marked his first entry into Christian lands. On leaving Constantinople to assume his new post, he did not hesitate to avail himself of the convenience of the Danube steamers; but, at the same time, he insisted upon conveying with him his whole harem, which, as I have already told you, is very extensive, even for a wealthy Turk—so extensive, indeed, that not only were all the cabins fully occupied by the female herd, that was penned away in them, but that a great tent was obliged to be erected upon the deck for the bestowal of all those who could find no room below.

By what oversight of arrangement I do not know, but certain it is, that other passengers, also, were taken on board the same steamer, and, among

others, two young Frenchmen, who, with the usual levity and thoughtlessness, to call it by a mild name, which characterises their country-people, and that utter regardlessness of the sensitiveness or feelings of other nations, so constantly to be found among them, had the imprudence—should I not drop the "r" in that word?—to try to lift up a part of the tent and have a peep at the females within. The action was perceived by the Pacha upon deck; his indignation burst immediately into a perfect frenzy of rage; he called upon the officer, who served as aide-de-camp, immediately to shoot down the Christian dogs. This officer, however, happened to be a renegade European, who was too well cognisant in European manners and European laws to obey his master's mandate. The Pacha then drew his own sabre, and attempted himself to rush upon the audacious Christians; at the same instant, however, the captain of the steamer interposed, and, aided by the conductor and sailors, restrained the infuriated Turk almost by violence.

The scene of confusion and tumult upon deck is said to have passed all description. With difficulty, at last, the captain was able to moderate the raging Pacha's murderous intentions, with the

promise that the two aggressors should retire, and make no further indiscreet attempt to satisfy their curiosity. With the two Christians, however, the captain had a still harder part to play than with the Turk, for they protested violently against any restraint being put upon their deeds, insisted upon doing what they liked, and offered the strongest opposition to the captain's will, until the latter at last restored some calm by the firm threat, at which the two Frenchmen blustered still more, but in vain, that, if they did not "behave properly," and leave the Turkish women beneath the tent in peace, he would set them out on shore, no matter on what point of land, upon his own responsibility. Against this conduct on the part of the captain the two wrong-headed young men lodged a complaint, it appears, with the administration of the steamers, upon their arrival at Pest; but, as may be well supposed, their accusation only led to their own more complete discomfiture, and the justification of the firm behaviour of the captain, which, perhaps, had alone prevented a scene of bloodshed.

A strange and melancholy result, however, afterwards arose from this tragi-comic conflict of Turkish and European habits. In order to pre-

vent the recurrence of any such catastrophe, as the Pasha's fury and attempt to hew down the young men had nearly occasioned, an order was issued by the administration, that all orientals, on the Danube steamers, should be obliged to give up their arms to the captain upon coming on board. Unfortunately, the first two passengers, who were called upon to obey this regulation, were two Turks returning to the East,—I believe, after a pilgrimage to the shrine at Buda,—who did not understand any European language. Unaware of the cause why their arms were demanded from them, they took it into their heads, as it afterwards appeared, that they were about to be treacherously treated and bow-stringed forthwith, and, after a short consultation between themselves, flung themselves both into the Danube. The steamer was immediately stopped, and a boat lowered. One of the unhappy men was drowned, however; the other reached the shore, and ran up into the country; he was pursued and overtaken; but he resisted what he supposed his capture with desperation. It was with the greatest difficulty that he could be at length made to understand the unfortunate mistake to which his friend had fallen a victim.

From the fortress height we descended, at last, to the old Turkish town. The principal street, which skirts the bottom of the promontory, is the chief centre of movement and business; and, although it may present, from one end to the other, only one long scene of what may be supposed to be "tumble-down" poverty, yet it has everywhere that stamp of picturesque variety about it, that makes me feel again as if I had been suddenly transported into the midst of an Asiatic world, with all its mixture of rich, glowing colour, and of dirt. While others abused, I revelled in that strange charm, which you, too, know how to find in wretchedness and dirt, *when it is picturesque*, to say nothing of the thousand reminiscences of those dreams of our early youth, stolen from the "Arabian Nights," which every step conjures up again before us, in a fanciful reality, in this little thoroughly oriental bit of Belgrade.

The whole long narrow street is lined by low, ricketty little wooden houses, to the fantastic, rugged beams of which an oriental Callot in architecture could scarce render justice. Above, their construction is indescribable; the disorder is of the most frantic description; their lower

parts are open to the streets, so as to leave the narrow interiors visible to the passer-by.

In one shed stands a turbaned baker, taking small round loaves out of a most primitive oven; in another sits a Jewish-looking tailor, with the huge spectacles of a Rembrandt picture on his nose, employed in fashioning a gold-embroidered vest. Here reclines upon a carpet a tobacco and pipe-seller, with his gold-worked and nut-brown wares hanging in bunches, or festoons, over his head; his pipe, which usually makes him look like a living sign to his own shop, is lying by his side, sending up its cloud no longer, for it is the Ramazan, and he is forbidden to enjoy the luxury of smoking until after sun-down. There, again, elevated about three feet from the street, is a sort of open stage, like the front of a very small tumbler's show at a fair, all behung with drapery also; and, in a circle, on this little stage, sit grouped a variety of white-turbaned Turks, more or less richly attired, but looking very sleepy and sulky that they cannot smoke, on account of the fast. This is a coffee-house; another, of a similar description, is level with the street in its middle space, but has raised terraces on either side, covered with carpets and mats. Presently comes a barber's shop, in the

interior of which squats a pious old Mussulman, submitting his grey head to be shaven by a dapper smug Turkish barber, who, as he stares at the passing strangers, gashes, I fear, the poor old devotee's scalp most unmercifully.

And all these pictures are lighted with such a glare of sun, and darkened in their backgrounds with such a depth of shade, that you cannot doubt that they are eastern pictures on which you are looking. Before these open booths stand, here and there, old Turks, in the veritable rich old Turkish costume, who do not seem to know how they came there, or why they still stand there: and further on, a slender boy, unturbaned, but with shaven head, and in full white breeches, allows himself to be driven into a bargain for a large dark-green water-melon, from among a huge pile of the same fruit before him, by a veiled female, whose eyes, however, are all the brighter, as she endeavours to render their expression touching and seducing to the advantage of her bargain. And now our way is stopped by a strange, misshapen, lumbering machine, drawn by two white oxen, which you may take to be a tumbril, but which you will be told is a carriage, with actual living beings inside.

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About the middle of this old Turkish street, you are surprised, also, by the ruins of buildings that appear to have been extensive palaces, and are constructed in the French taste of the time of Louis XIV.: you look at them with astonishment, as you see their broken European heads peeping over the low, shambling Turkish sheds before them, and at first wonder how they got there; but you soon learn that these buildings were erected during the time of the Austrian occupation, and that one of them was the palace-residence of Prince Eugene. Whatever people may say of dirt, and filth, and disgust, I must own that I get to the end of my Turkish street with regret; so much there has been to amuse and startle me. I suppose the fact is that my eyes are in general allowed to take precedence of my nose.

During our ramble through this part of the town, we took a fancy to turn down a long lane of white walls overhung with thick verdure; at the further end of it was a low gate partially open. This gate admitted us into a small court full of trees, at the end of which stood a mosque. As we were aware that the entry of the Giaour into the Mussulman places of worship, particularly if he have a fee between his fingers, is no longer looked upon

with so much horror by the "true believer," we did not scruple to push open the door, which was only upon latch, and enter. No one was within. The interior was of the same simple description as that of the fortress mosque; but in striking contrast with the plainness of the rest of the building, were the rich gold-embroidered carpets spread upon the stone floor. The whole religious retreat was deliciously cool, and disposed the mind to tranquil devotion.

Before dining with our amiable consul, another business was undertaken by us; but, as it was bathing in a Turkish bath, I cannot with any discretion call upon you to accompany me, or dilate upon all the process of boiling and kneading and drying, with the interminable changes of linen, which characterises Turkish bathing in the marble halls of the bath, or go into details about the pleasantness and comfort of this genuine oriental luxury. Besides, my letter has already reached a most preposterous length. My visit to the place two years ago, and the scenes I then witnessed, however, may afford you some amusement; and to them I will revert, when I again find time to take up my pen.

LETTER XV.

REMINISCENCES OF SCENES IN BELGRADE TWO YEARS PREVIOUSLY. —VISIT TO THE PASHA.—INTERIOR OF HIS RESIDENCE.—EUROPEAN FURNITURE. — RECEPTION BY HAFIZ PASHA. — TURKISH FASHIONS OF HOSPITALITY.—CONVERSATION BY DRAGOMAN.—THE BARRACKS OF THE TURKISH GARRISON.—A PORTLY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL. — TWO SERVIAN CHIEFS, AND A SKETCH OF THEIR HISTORY.—VISIT TO WUCSICS.—THE INTERIOR OF A SERVIAN HOUSE.—APPEARANCE AND CHARACTER OF WUCSICS.—VISIT TO PETRONIEVICS.—ANOTHER POPULAR HERO.—RETURN TO PRESENT TIMES.—DINNER AT THE BRITISH CONSUL'S.—DEPARTURE FROM BELGRADE.—THE QUARANTINE ESTABLISHMENT AND CUSTOM-HOUSE AT SEMLIN. — NIGHT QUARTERS ON A STEAMER.

SINCE, during my visit this year to Belgrade, I have not a single sketch of "an interior" to offer you, and as I know that you look upon such pictures as more interesting in a good touristic album than the eternal views of landscape that every one can gaze upon *en passant*, I will even try to keep my promise, and call upon my memory to conjure up again the scenes I witnessed two years ago in the Servian capital. My

brain, in such efforts of recollection, generally proceeds, as I fancy must the intuition of a person thrown into a magnetic sleep, and called upon to transport his liberated soul to distant regions: at first the vision seems generally confused, misty, indistinct; after a time some of the more prominent figures and forms appear to come more distinctly out of the dim cloud; at last the whole phantasmagoric picture may be supposed to be impressed upon the sense in more vivid but still shadowy shapes—brightly coloured, living, real, but still undefined, as one of Turner's water-colour drawings, which often, by the way, will play you exactly the same trick, and must be looked at long and earnestly, with all the intensity of *will* that is necessary to a mesmerised individual, in order that all their wondrous reality of nature may be felt and comprehended. After this fashion, I have thrown my memory into a sort of mesmeric sleep. I have peered through the mist of the other impressions with which two years' tolerably hard usage of the imagination had veiled it, and by degrees my pictures of times past have been repainted somewhat more distinctly on my brain. I will paint them to you as I there find them.

My first visit on that occasion was to the Pasha

in the fortress. I was accompanied there by a friend, and by a Servian nobleman—a senator, and a man of some literary reputation in the new-born literature of the land—as our introducer. The fortress, its approach, its interior court, and the "tumble-down" palace of the Pasha, I have described to you in my last letter. You will first find me, then, mounting that same shaky outer staircase, of which I also made mention, and traversing a portion of the still more shaky outer gallery, that, by its trembling beneath our feet, I might have fancied as full of trap-doors and pit-falls as the jealous Louis XI. rendered the approach to his dark castle of Plessis les Tours.

We arrived, however, without any accident or premeditated act of treachery, into a sort of anti-chamber, surrounded with numerous open doors. "Guards and attendants" were drawn up here in tolerably numerous array; but, in spite of this denomination, as it may be found at the end of a list of *dramatis personæ* in an old Turkish tragedy, any oriental fancies it might give me would have been utterly dissipated by their make-believe European frock-coats and trousers, had not their swarthy faces and red caps somewhat helped us back again

to the East. The Pasha, we were here told, was at leisure to receive us, and a broad curtain being rolled up from before one of the doors, very much after the fashion of a "drop-scene" upon the stage, we were forthwith ushered into a large square room, the interior arrangements of which were, alas! but a sort of bastard imitation of a European style of furnishing.

There were no embroidered carpets! no gold-braided mattresses! no broad divans of Persian silks! Around the room were arranged hard sofas, that invited in no way to oriental repose: and there were lines of uncomfortable-looking wooden chairs, that modern luxurious habit would have deemed never made to sit upon, and a few ill-fashioned tables, the coverings of the furniture, as well as the curtains to the windows, being of a coarse, dirty, well-worn chintz. It was very evident that our Pasha was a Turk of the "new order of things," devoted to European systems, as well as European fashions; and this was not exactly the man whom I should have most cared to see. Not much time was left me, however, for any grumblings of the kind; for we had scarcely time to look upon the beautiful views afforded by the many windows from the fortress height over the Danube, Semlin, and the

country round,—the only attractions of this great reception-room,—when the curtain over the entrance-door or archway was again rolled up, and the Pahsa made his appearance, followed by several attendants. He was simply attired in a European blue frock-coat, of a military cut, and blue trousers; his head, on which he wore the oriental red cap—the fez—now of such constant use in Turkey, to the exclusion of the turban, alone preserving anything like an Eastern aspect.

Hafiz Pasha, well known as a zealous, but by no means always successful, Turkish general, appeared to be between fifty and sixty years of age. The long beard which swept his frock-coat was grizzled, as was probably his hair, could we have seen it; but his complexion was fresh and animated. A pair of keen dark eyes, a boldly curved nose, and a sharp but well-formed face, gave him a look of much penetration and sagacity, while over all reigned an air of placid and easy good-nature. He was accompanied by a young man, whose fair face and hair were so decidedly European, that I was not surprised to learn he was a German renegade, a Baron Wenzlar by name, who was attached to the Pasha's person :

this latter personage was a good-looking, gentlemanly young man; he performed the part of interpreter to his Excellency, who, I understood, was able to speak French, but very shy of producing his acquirement, until the established dragoman, a deformed and cunning-looking dirty little Greek, arrived and undertook his official task with far less ability.

As soon as we were primly and uncommodiously seated upon our hard-bottomed chairs, opposite to the Pasha, who was not at all better accommodated, pipes were handed round—long Turkish pipes, with tubes decorated in all manner of Turkish adornment, and amber richly bejewelled and diamond-studded mouth-pieces, these, at least, were genuine, and so was the exquisite, but intoxicating tobacco. As soon as Pasha and guests were thus provided, an attendant knelt at the feet of each of us, holding in a small pair of tongs a glowing piece of charcoal, which, laying it on each heap of tobacco in each bowl, each of our prostrated servitors began blowing vigorously, like a dingy Æolus. As soon as the business of pipe-lighting was duly and ably accomplished, came other attendants with little coffee-cups, stuck into saucers, that looked like small silver gilt egg-cups, and con-

taining a very scanty sup of strong pure coffee, more than half of each tiny cup being filled with thick grounds, which, had I not remembered by sudden instinct to have read of such a Turkish practice in coffee-making, in some book of Eastern travels, I should infallibly have taken into my mouth, at the imminent risk of choking myself, or of sputtering for half an hour. Then followed another servant with a silver salver, loaded with jams, and preserves, and sweetmeats, a single spoonful of which each guest seemed to be expected to take —that which I tasted was a delicious mixture of strawberries, and roses—and fresh water.

Upon being left by the attendants, after these usual formalities of Eastern hospitality, the conversation began to grow more animated; and, in spite of the embarrassment of an intermediate person to interpret each word,—and not always in the most able manner, for that tiresome little Greek hunchback it must be said,—it never flagged for a moment. Travels, foreign countries,—among which Russia was particularly mentioned, the Pasha having resided at Petersburgh, and retaining a very lively and agreeable recollection of the balls and *fêtes* he had there witnessed,—the Emperor of Russia, Louis Philippe, and Queen Victoria,

as I well remember, and probably a variety of other matters which have glided from my mind, were all passed in review, almost in the same fashion as they might have been in any other drawing-room in any other land: the impression remains upon me, of being no little surprised to find that the Pasha, in spite of his isolated position at Belgrade, and the difficulty of receiving communication and information, was tolerably *au fait* of all that was passing in Europe.

The more characteristic part of the conversation turned upon the establishment of a sanitary cordon against the plague, and lazaret regulations at Constantinople, the opposition made to such an innovation by the religious ideas of the Turks, and their belief in fatalism, as connected with the subject. Although he did not express his opinion in any decided manner, I could easily imagine that I was not wrong in my conjecture, that our Pasha was a favourer of "new lights," for, as he warmed with the subject, he related a variety of historical anecdotes connected with the old Turkish ideas, most of which were of a very humorous description. But here my memory fails me too much to enable me to relate to you any of them in turn. These stories, however, were followed, I right well

remember me, by others of a still more delicate turn, relative to Turkish manners and morals, of which the old Turkish dignitary relieved his mind with a sly gravity that was peculiarly characteristic; while in turn we endeavoured to amuse him with European anecdotes of a similar description, and several French stories, historical or modern, that seemed greatly to tickle his Excellency's fancy.

In this interchange of chit-chat our old host seemed inclined to grow so talkative and sociable, that, when we twice rose with the intention of taking our departure, we were twice requested to sit down and stay a little longer, the Pasha each time clapping his hands for the purpose of summoning his attendants, after a fashion that reminded me again of the Arabian Nights and Richard Swiveller, and giving orders that fresh pipes should be brought, as an inducement to us, probably, to linger yet a while. Upon one of these occasions the pipe was passed to me from the Pasha's own mouth, as a still further honour and further inducement, I was obliged very flatteringly to suppose. At last, upon a third attempt, we were allowed to take our departure; and, upon bidding our host adieu, to my great

surprise, we were cordially shaken by the hand, after the most approved European fashion, by the affable old Turk, who seemed determined to do the honours in his best European manner. A little orientalism might have, perhaps, pleased me better; but the intention was everything; and I should have an ill-grace to quarrel with him for his cordiality. And so we left the palace, through two rows of bowing attendants, as we had come; myself partly pleased, partly disappointed with my visit.

After this reception, we descended from the height of the citadel, along unsteady pathways cut in the rock, and amidst very ruined and desolate-looking walls, to inspect the barracks which lay below, almost on the banks of the Danube, although still within the fortifications. In the mass of shed-like wooden buildings that ran about distractedly in all directions here, we were taken to one pre-eminent hovel, to be introduced to the lieutenant-colonel in immediate command of the garrison troops; and in the room of this officer, a fat, bloated-looking old Turk, with a lively laughing eye, who in his preposterous frock-coat and trousers represented a very respectable ambulatory woolsack standing upon two stout sample-bags below, we were again obliged

to go through all the forms of Turkish hospitality, in the shape of coffee, preserves, and pipes.

During the conversation that ensued, I remember that our most amusing oriental Lambert was very desirous of learning—heaven knows with what intentions!—whether the fair sex in most European lands were *really* so averse to being embraced by a man who smoked! and that I consoled the unhappy old warrior with the assurance, that in Paris, at least, among certain ladies of rank and quality, bearing the title of "*lionnes*," there even existed many, who themselves occasionally indulged in "the weed." I have not forgotten to this hour with what an ineffable gleam of satisfaction the twinkling eye of the old gentleman lighted up at this piece of information; and I formed the pious wish, that, in his next dreams, he might be blessed with visions of fair European houris, enveloped in clouds of celestial tobacco-smoke. After the fire of our lieutenant-colonel's imagination and of our pipes had been gradually expended in this interesting discourse, we went, preceded by this moving enormity, the sight of whose back might have been envied as by many a feeder for the Smithfield market, to inspect the barracks, which certainly were most rambling and ricketty

wooden buildings in their structure, but where, spite of the uncouth aspect of the European uniforms, I found more order, cleanliness, and military demeanour in the bearing of the men, than I had been led to expect. Except our rolling guide, none of the other officers appeared to have an apartment to himself: but at the end of each of the long chambers, which seemed to be intended for use by day, as well as for sleeping-rooms, was a sort of elevated daïs for the especial use of an officer, who was thus separated only by a step or two from the common soldiers, and condemned to pass his life with them in a sort of fraternity, somewhat at variance with European ideas of discipline.

After inspecting several rooms, in which there appeared to be no difference, and whole rows of faces, which, old and young, seemed to admit of as little variation in their general monotony of ugliness, we left the barracks and the fortress.

That genuine eastern type, which I had hoped to find, but which I had sought in vain, in the fortress, I found, in stronger traits, immediately afterwards, in two visits to the houses of two remarkable Servians, whose national appointments, Christians though they were, were far more tinted with an oriental colouring. But this further "vision of

memory" necessitates a little preface to its separate little chapter.

Just previously to my arrival in Belgrade, two years ago, the whole population of Servia had been for some days past in a state of ferment and excitement, which had by no means entirely subsided when I paid my visit to the capital. This commotion had been excited by the return to their country of the two well-known Servian patriots, Wucsics—pray, pronounce "Vutchitch"—and Petronievics—no less "vitch" at the termination. Exiled by the influence of Russia, after the part they had taken in the deposition of the princes of the Milosch family, and on account of their supposed manœuvres during the election of the present Prince,—manœuvres which the northern power chose to stigmatise as tending to rouse the public to riot and revolt, and exercising an undue influence in the establishment of a new Prince on the throne of Servia,—they had long remained as *quasi* prisoners at Constantinople. Russia had, however, at length withdrawn its opposition to their return to their native land; and the public entry of the restored exiles into Belgrade, as well as their reception throughout the whole country, as they had passed along, had just taken place with all the

solemnity and enthusiasm of a popular triumph. Unfortunately, I arrived too late to witness the scenes that took place on this occasion; but nothing, I was told, could be more striking in modern days, than the semi-barbaric triumphant march of the procession that had attended the heroes of the day upon their entry: it was described to me as a revived pageant of the Roman triumphs of old. Not only had the whole population of the capital streamed together, giving an aspect of extraordinary interest to the festive scene by the varieties of cut, colour, embroidery, and richness in the costumes of the mixed races of a semi-oriental people, together with the senate and Servian authorities, and the whole disposable force of the Servian military, who, by the way, although far superior in appearance to the Turkish guard, are but a bastard imitation in their uniforms of the Russian soldiery, but the Pasha, also, as Turkish governor of Belgrade, had sent, along with his adjutants and officers and a numerous guard to do the popular Servian chiefs honour, two troops of animals, consisting of fifty oxen and a hundred sheep, as a present to the heroes of the day, wherewith to regale the people upon the festive occasion. I had missed all this, and, besides,

all the harangues, and addresses, and Te Deums, and dinners, and illuminations, and bonfires on the mountain heights, and balls and rejoicings and feastings of the people, which had lasted for three days, keeping the whole capital in a continual feverish state of animation, festivity, and excitement. This was, at the time, a matter of much annoyance to me; for you know the pleasure I take in witnessing all popular scenes which wear a national look, and particularly in a country so picturesque as are these border provinces of Turkey.

Another point, however, had been gained by my delay; the official and public ceremonies of the occasion having been once duly gone through, and the ferment having somewhat subsided, there remained nothing of it, but the blackening marks of bonfires in the open squares, and a few remaining pots of half-consumed fat, with big half-burnt wicks, still lingering on the tops of broken walls, and tainting the air with that odious greasy smell, which may be pardoned in the midst of the excitement of a *fête*, but which sickens afterwards like the scent of rancid viands after a full meal—*sic transit gloria mundi*, in a little flame and much smoke, happy, if, as on many occasions,

it leave no stink behind it—all these matters, I say, being tolerably over, I had the better opportunity of paying my respects to the two great men of the day, who now might be expected to be somewhat more at liberty to receive a stranger.

The first drive of our party was to the house of Wucsics, whose real name is Thomas Periochics,—his popular name Wucsics being only one of those nick-names, as it were, which are constantly bestowed on individuals by a singular custom of the country, rather as a mark of distinction, than out of any feeling of disrespect, and afterwards retained as the true appellation and family name. In the instance of the Servian chief, the name signifies, in the language of the country, "the little wolf," and was given to him when a child by his grandmother, as if in prophetic anticipation of the resolute and wild character of his after years. The house of Wucsics, who seemed not to be without fortune, was one of the new European-looking houses which I have told you are springing up like mushrooms in every direction over the regenerating Servian capital: but the first sight that struck our eyes, in a sort of vestibule at the entrance, where we were received by several domestics in Servian attire, was a countless quantity of slippers, depo-

sited at the bottom of the staircase; and, on mounting, we found an ante-room filled with the respective owners of the objects of this seeming shoe-shop, who had left them behind them, from an oriental fashion of respect. As far as I recollect, these courtiers were chiefly Servian peasants, or poorer townspeople of Belgrade, women as well as men, in varied and picturesque costume, and among them two or three Greek priests, all waiting to be admitted to an audience of the popular great man of the day.

After being ushered through two or three small rooms, furnished chiefly with divans, embroidered carpets, and richly tapestried mattresses, in Turkish fashion, and hung with oriental arms of all descriptions, we found ourselves in the presence of Wucsics himself, who was in converse with two or three other oriental-looking personages, one of whom was afterwards introduced to me as Protics, at that time the Servian minister of war: the whole party was seated upon a large low divan, although not cross-legged in true Mussulman fashion.

The Servian patriot was attired in the full costume of the country, pipe in hand, and received us with politeness, but with the air of a man who is

accustomed to a certain degree of homage. His physiognomy was striking, his features long, strongly marked, and decided, and, if a prepossessed idea did not lead my imagination astray, there was a strong trace of the name so prophetically bestowed—"the little wolf"—upon them; his person was tall, his hair mixed with grey, the colour of his complexion fresh and animated, and his face but little wrinkled for his age, which might have been then about fifty-four. What most arrested my attention, however, was the peculiar look of his small grey eyes, that peered out from their overhanging lids with a marked expression of cunning rather than intelligence, to which his habit of closing first one eye and then the other, alternately, in speaking, added in a peculiar degree. I remember having expected to find an air of bold openness in his physiognomy, but being utterly disappointed in my expectations. Slyness, wariness, *ruse*, in fact, in the eyes, and resolution in the lower part of the face, were the predominant characteristics.

The whole party being again seated on the broad divan, after the first formalities, Turkish pipes were handed to the new-comers, the host again doing me the somewhat questionable honour of giving me that from his own mouth: and then a

pretty oriental-looking damsel, bearing a striking resemblance to a certain pretty Matilda that we wot of, in that most picturesque and becoming attire which I have already so often mentioned as being a happy mixture of the Greek and Turkish costumes, brought round, as usual, a salver with jams and preserves, and was followed by a youth with a bottle of fresh water and glasses. Shortly afterwards the wife of Wucsics herself made her appearance, and we were introduced to her in due form. She was a remarkably handsome woman—a Greek by extraction, I was told—of about thirty years of age, dressed in a robe of gold tissue over which was worn a dark green velvet jacket, trimmed with fur, and richly embroidered with gold; her dark hair, of which there was a rich profusion, was braided and wound round the lower part of a Greek cap, also of green velvet, and worked with pearls. This apparition stands forward in my memory as a picture of wonderfully striking effect. She excused herself for not having served us instead of an attendant,—as it would appear is the custom of politeness in the mistress of a house towards her visitors in this country,—on account of weariness and indisposition, after the extreme fatigues she had been obliged to undergo in the last few days;

and, after a few complimentary phrases, uttered with the grace of a queen, she retired.

The tenour of the conversation of the Servian chief has remained singularly impressed upon my mind, on account of its having opened to me a "new light" in the character of this man, whom I had until then always imagined to be a bluff, blunt, honest patriot, and having let me see how little I knew of the character of the Greek-Sclavonian. He spoke almost exclusively, and with emphasis, upon the circumstances in which he was placed, and the events attending the final deposition of the Milosch family. That he should have felt himself elated by the triumphant reception he had met with in returning to his own country, was not a matter of much surprise to me; and I received with little astonishment his pompous accounts of the crowds that swarmed to meet him during his whole progress through the country, and of the acclamations and the tears that greeted him; but I own I was rather startled at the coarse jokes and constant raillery with which he attacked, without mercy, the Milosches, both father and son, as well as the ministers who had fled the country, he himself having served them both in turn, until their final deposition, under intimate and friendly relations.

I have not forgotten either a declaration made by him with an air of much pride and boasting, which again took me by surprise, namely, that he could neither read nor write: I was afterwards informed that it is more than suspected he can do both well, but that he affected this ignorance in order to assimilate himself better with the people, whose idol he thus made himself—perhaps, also, to surprise the secrets of those who might trust too unwarily to this affected ignorance. He expressed himself, also, as wholly unwilling to enter again into public affairs, and as completely devoid of all pretension and ambition as regards any distinguished position in the land; and, as he bore the character of being better adapted to be a military hero than a politician or a diplomatist, I might have believed him the more easily then, had not his cunning grey eyes done what they could to give his mouth the lie. Subsequent events have proved that his eyes were the truer prognosticators of the two.

When, after an interview of about half an hour, during which the Servian patriot talked incessantly, and with an air of infinite complacency, but, at the same time, with that affectation of blunt, homely manner, which, I fancy, is one of his

best nets to catch the affections of the people, we rose to take our departure, he again seized me by the button. I still see his eager eyes fixed upon mine, to inquire what was said in England about Servia—an indirect way of asking what was said about himself—and then to express his regret that he had no portrait of the Queen of England, to add to those he possesses of the other European potentates. Was that a hint still stronger?

From the house of one chief we drove to that of the other. It was a far humbler dwelling, at the extremity of a court, and attained by an outer wooden staircase; but the interior arrangements were, as in the apartments of Wucsics, almost entirely of eastern fashion, although of far less richness and pretension. I had been told to expect in Petronievics a man of more information, learning, sense, and talent than his rival, or rather brother, in the favour of the Servian people, but of less energy and resolution; and again I was deceived in the physiognomy I had expected to find. His general appearance brought vaguely to my mind the pictures I have seen of Fox; but there was a greater look of *bonhommie* and patriarchal simplicity about him, than I have remarked in any portrait of the English statesman. He

appeared a man of about sixty years of age. His manner was full of kindness, and of simple, almost affectionate, politeness, which formed a great contrast with that of Wucsics. There was more in it of an affable desire to be agreeable to his guests, than display himself off as the hero of the day.

Here the eastern fashion of pipes, preserves, and water was again put in practice; and the conversation opened, as usual, amidst a battery of smoke. So full of genial good-humoured talk was the old Servian, that our interview passed off in an unremitting flow of pleasant intercourse, except when interrupted, for a few minutes, by the entry of his wife, an elderly lady, attired in the usual Servian dress, with the variation only of a thick necklace of gold coins clasped tightly about her throat, who, like our other hostess, came, made her compliments, and retired. In perfect contrast, also, to the other Servian chief, it was only when strongly pressed that he spoke of himself and of his doings; and the dethroned family he invariably mentioned with delicacy. When led to speak of his reception on returning to his own country, he reverted to it with evident signs of emotion; he expressed himself surprised, as well

as touched, by the affection and attachment evinced by the Servians; and, as he at last warmed, as it were unconsciously, with the subject, he gave, among other very interesting matter relative to his own position in the country, a very lively picture of the manner in which his door was besieged—of that we had full evidence as we drove up—and related how the people flocked to him with details of their grievances, and supplications for redress of their wrongs, or even demands for explanations upon certain points in public affairs, and how they would not understand that he was only a private man, who could do nothing for them but give them advice, and how difficult he found it to content these people, who were accustomed to look upon him as a sort of public father, who could do all for them, and how he was left no peace, and sighed in vain for rest and quiet. All this, I remember, was said with a remarkable simplicity, which must have been the *acmé* of acting, did it contain an *arrière pensée*. My impression at that time was, that, if physiognomies are to be judged in this comedy-playing world, a greater stake might be wagered upon the honesty of this man, than on that of the other. Wucsics might be regarded as a hero; but, had I been a Ser-

vian, I should have been more inclined to look upon Petronievics as a father of the people.

And so ended my visits to the three most prominent personages in the Servian capital in the summer of 1844; the Prince, as I have told you, was absent; and with the last scene of the modest oriental-appointed appartments of Petronievics, fades away the "vision of memory" which I have endeavoured to conjure up. I rouse myself out of my magnetic sleep, and, happy if can shake off all drowsiness with it, I wake myself to the recollection of the realities of yesterday.

Among the pleasantest lights of this picture of the more immediate past, stands forward our dinner at our agreeable and highly-gifted consul's. I do not speak of the material dinner, for, excellent as may have been the tasteful mixture of European and oriental dishes with which the table was profusely supplied—and excellent I believe it was—you know that I am a very poor and ignorant *gourmet*, little worthy of the good things set forth before me, and a *gourmand* not at all. I speak of the "soul" of our dinner; and I beg you not to suppose me, by this expression, to be possessed of the spirit of dear Mrs. Wititterly, with whom, with due respect be it said, I chal-

lenge no resemblance. Well, then, the "soul" of our dinner was a very "pleasant soul," a "good soul," a "genial soul," or any other of those "souls" to which agreeable epithets are wont to be attached. Spite of the presence of foreigners, one of whom was the French consul, our conversation was held entirely in English—a striking proof, in so distant a country, and in the society of persons of different nations all speaking it "indifferent well" (the French consul, by the way, in the greatest perfection), of the influence which the far distant, "tight little island" exercises, far and wide, about the world. It had all the charm of reminiscences of home, enlivened by that brightness of colouring which the contact with foreign countries and enlightened foreigners bestows upon converse in a foreign land; and yet so pervading was the English spirit, that, had it not been for the eastern viands before me, and the Greek, in his glittering national costume, who officiated as "butler," or "*maître d'hotel*," along with the Servian attendants, I might have fancied myself as suddenly transported back to England, as, in the morning, I had been suddenly wafted over by genii to the East.

It was with regret, then, that I was reminded

that our boat awaited us, and that we must be back in Semlin before nightfall, if we did not desire to be treated as "contumacious," and subjected, still *pro formâ*, but after a most undesirable matter of form, to the rigours of the Lazaret regulations. It was with regret that I shook hands with our amiable consul, bid him adieu, and heard him murmur as a farewell, "I trust, in your roamings, you will not quite forget the poor exile:" and, in truth, I can well imagine, that, when the first novelty, that charms the passing traveller in Belgrade, ceases to keep his imagination on the wing, the man of intellect and education may feel himself in the Servian capital like a lion imprisoned in a dull tarnished cage. It was with regret, even, that I found myself hurrying, with my companions, down the steep stony street that leads along the fortress height to the water-side, amidst those scenes of picturesque dirt and bright disorder of which I was about to take my leave.

The same gay pictures which had amused me upon the rugged quay upon my arrival were again grouped in still more plentiful confusion, as, after exchanging passports and permissions, again signed and countersigned, we stepped into our ferry-

boat. On the broad green mound of one of the lower bastions of the fortifications was a group of Turkish soldiers, all kneeling, with a corporal at their head, and facing the sun in its setting. Their feet were bare, and they knelt on sackcloth-looking carpets. They seemed to be performing their evening devotions with considerable fervour, for they continually crossed their arms with no very gentle slaps across their breasts, and then all with one accord smote their heads, with an energy more devout than agreeable to witness, and certainly to feel, upon the ground. This was one of the last oriental pictures upon which my eye dwelt, as our Austrian boatmen rowed us across the great mouth of the Saave.

As we were then towed up the Danube towards Semlin, along the marshy banks of the river, the only ornaments of which were the frequent low watch-huts of the borderers, the minarets, and domes, and cypress groves, and Turkish fortress of Belgrade began gradually to diminish in the distance, and give us that perfect *mirage* image of the East, which a nearer contact with the Servian town had somewhat faded and destroyed. And so I bade adieu to Belgrade. There Austrian and Turk had ruled in turn, during many convulsive

and deadly struggles. The Turk had, at last, possessed it long; and now the new state of Servia there raises its head, and begins to adorn its so-called free principality with a half-gilded crown. What will be the future destinies of that uneasy land? I thought, as we glided nearer and nearer Semlin, the low houses of which were still invisible even behind banks so low. Between tottering Turkey and grasping Russia, howwill Servia stand?

But from any such fancies I was soon roused by the necessity, imposed upon us "willy-nilly," of witnessing all the tiresome "humours" of the quarantine comedy. We were led along an interminable length of dusty road between high embankments and deep ditches, through stockaded gateways and past Austrian sentinels, into a space of ground which looked like a small village fortified in haste against an enemy.

The enemy, however, (the plague,) was just now far away, and threatened no invasion; and so the formalities of the time of war were much abridged. We were passed, with the mere ceremony of being stared in the face and having our permissions taken from us, through the long building of the Lazaret office, where a quantity of Ratzian peasant

wives, with white kerchiefs over their swarthy faces, were waiting, laughingly, to be let out of the pen one by one, like a flock of dusky sheep. We were passed, with almost as little observation, through a similar building belonging to the custom-house, although here our companions, the peasant women, were somewhat more rigorously attacked about the regions of their full petticoats, and in the recesses of their baskets and the bales they had poised upon their heads; and, after skirting the little colony of low cottages, each separated from a court and from each other by high spiked palisades, and nested in its little acacia grove and garden,—the temporary prisons, very disagreeable to inhabit, although so agreeable to look at, of the "detained in quarantine," now all empty and forlorn-looking as a deserted village, but perhaps, on that account, all the more joyous,—we were let out, through further stockaded and palisaded openings, upon the road leading to the southern gate of Semlin.

I will not again take you an evening stroll about the dull, dreary, nasty frontier town of Semlin, or invite you to our chatty "tea" in the quarters of our good Queen's courier. You will probably be as tired as myself. Suffice to say, that, as the steamer which was about to take me further

down the Danube was to start on the morrow at a very early and somewhat undefined hour in the morning, I determined to bid adieu to my kind friends that night, and take up my sleeping quarters, uneasy as they might be, on board my "gentle monster." My heart was somewhat heavy as I shook hands with my agreeable companions on the dark, muddy quay, for the night was overcast, and the two steamers, that lay sleeping side by side, the one coming from below, the other about to proceed further down the Danube, looked dismal and prison-like, and almost spectral, with their ill-defined hulls and black chimneys. I groped my way, however, in "darkness visible," across planks and intervening deck, to my own watery lodging; and there, in the faint glimmer of a solitary taper in the cabin, which dimly revealed a few sleeping forms, and with the accompaniment of some not very pleasant strains from a rebellious nose or two, I bid you "Good night."

LETTER XVI.

DIFFICULTIES OF DESCRIPTION.—FIRST ASPECT OF THE DANUBE BELOW SEMLIN.—PANCSOVA.—A NEW COMPANION.—RIVALRY BETWEEN THE SERVIAN AND HUNGARIAN BANKS OF THE DANUBE.—SEMENDRIA.—FRESH MOUNTAIN SCENERY.—ALT MOLDAVA.—GOLUMBACZ AND THE BABACAI.—THE DEFILES AND RAPIDS OF THE DANUBE.—THE CAVERN OF GOLUMBACZ.—THE GREAT ROAD ALONG THE DEFILES.—THE DANUBE LAKES.—DRENKOVA.—REGULATIONS OF THE MILITARY FRONTIERS.—AN EVENING RAMBLE IN THE HILLS OF DRENKOVA.—WALLACHIAN COSTUMES.—A BORDER VILLAGE AMONG THE HILLS.—RIGOURS OF THE BORDER SENTINELS.—NIGHT ON BOARD THE STEAMER.—DANUBE SCENERY BELOW DRENKOVA.—THE PROMONTORY OF GREBEN.—MILANOVACZ.—TRICULA.—THE DEFILE OF KAZAN.—THE ROMAN ROAD OF TRAJAN.—TABLET TO COMMEMORATE ITS CONSTRUCTION.—LIVING SCENES ON THE SERVIAN BANK.—VETERANI'S CAVE.—ORSOVA.—LANDING AND DEPARTURE FOR THE BATHS OF MEHADIA.

In promising to send you an account of my Danube journey to the extreme limit of the Hungarian fortress, I little reflected at the time upon the monotonous part I was about to act. I find

myself continually obliged to mount the same stage, (the boards of a steamer,) to introduce the same or similar *dramatis personæ*, and to paint you a succession of similar panoramic scenes; and, in these days of modern drama, when variety of scenery is relied upon as the main prop of the success of a piece, this latter error is unpardonable. Variety, it is true, I have enough to offer—variety to the eye, but variety that is transformed into monotony in description by the pen—variety, that it is impossible to convey to the sense, in mere transpositions of the same words. The splendour and excellence of the living world of nature is ever changing, ever new: as you stretch forth your arms to its embrace, it always springs forward to meet you in some fresh form of loveliness; and in such moments of rapture you may discourse in the most various and manifold converse with heaven and earth, and be sure ever to receive some new answer, some unexpected lesson. But, however exciting such living scenes of beauty, they pall upon the sense in their constant repetition in painting, and far more in mere description. Enthralling as may have been in reality the beauties that fill the famous gallery of the King of Bavaria in effigy,—and how seducing the loveliness

of many of them in living nature I have had frequent opportunities of knowing in other days,—yet the collection of their faces in mere portraiture has always been to me a very monotonous, or, at all events, no very soul-stirring exhibition. But I must e'en take my chance with you in the exhibition of my "gallery of beauties" that it is my task to paint to you; and, should I weary you, I have no other excuse to offer you than that invariable phrase with which every Frenchman glides out of a dilemma or a difficult argument, "*Enfin! Que voulez-vous? C'est ainsi.*"

I have time to take breath, however, before I plunge into the full torrent of nature's wonders that has overwhelmed me, as I steamed on and on, down this most magnificent river. On first leaving Semlin, there was no reason whatever for going at once into raptures. There is something very imposing, certainly, in the vast expanse of waters which forms the great bosom of the Danube before the fortress of Belgrade; there is an interest still in the vision of the Turkish town: but as with the first grey light of morning we paddled away from the quay of Semlin, and the capital of Servia was by degrees lost to our view, the scenery on either side of us possessed only the charm of being in

harmony with the grey misty dawn. On the left, or Hungarian bank of the river extended an ocean, a veritable ocean of plain; and in the word "ocean" there may be less of metaphor than you may suppose, since it appears, that, at the periods of the increase of the Danube's waters, the inundations, which cover for miles the whole extent of those marshy, flat lands, would give them veritably the look of the "open sea," were it not for the tops of the few trees that are dotted here and there upon them, and the border huts, which, standing upon their stilt-like posts, at intervals, shew the necessity of such precautions, in order to prevent them, at such seasons, from squatting in the water. On the Servian bank the illusion is kept up. Low sandy cliffs, mottled with scanty vegetation, skirt the shore; sea-gull looking birds hover over them; a few miserable fishers' huts stand perched upon the cliffs: in the extreme background above are some wooded hills; and here and there a ravine-like sandy road leads down to the beach; and, as the waves raised by the steamer lash the shingle, it is with difficulty you can again divest yourself of the idea that you are skirting a sea-shore.

The day had scarcely broke over this monotonous scenery when we arrived at the station of

Pancsova, one of the largest garrisons on the border frontiers; and certainly, had I not been aware of the fact, I should never have suspected that a great military town lay so near: all traces of habitations disappeared behind the trees that skirted the flat horizon at about half a mile from the river's banks. At this place a young Frenchman whom I had known in Paris, and who, having heard of my arrival, was anxious to accompany me as far as my voyage went, came on board. What series of adventures had swept him by that "tide in the affairs of men," which often takes deviations from any possibly expected course as capricious as those of the Danube itself, from his dearly beloved and regretted Paris, to the dull military Hungarian town of Pancsova, on the frontiers of Turkey, it would require a respectable three-volumed novel to relate with any detail; and, spite of your possible curiosity, I cannot venture upon an episode of so complicated a nature here.

As he was a lively, agreeable, and tender-hearted little fellow, I could make no objection to the companionship he proferred. Of his well-established character for *amabilité*, I might glean some proofs from the sight of a bevy of "ladies fair" and "gentle *demoiselles*," who, spite of the very early

hour in the morning, and the fatigues of a ball which had lasted almost to daybreak, and only left time for a change of *toilette*, had escorted him to the river's banks. Pocket-handkerchiefs were also in fair hands, and were ever and anon, as we still lingered at the station, applied to fair faces; but whether to eyes or noses,—for the morning was rather chill, — I was too discreet to investigate. *Adieux*, however, were made; the moistened pocket-handkerchiefs were gracefully waved, as the steamer bore "*le petit Français*" away; and my good-tempered little new companion, although he at first shook his good-looking head somewhat mournfully and sentimentally, speedily recovered that light-heartedness, which is the characteristic of his nationality and his age, as we paddled onwards.

Meanwhile, hills on the Servian bank began to give themselves the air of looking like mountains: at the foot of one of them stands the Turkish fortress of Semendria,—a strange triangular stronghold, flanked by a countless quantity of towers, placed helter-skelter, like thickly-grown clumps of asparagus, as if more for fancy than for use, and wearing the appearance rather of pieces of "middle age" European castles, which might have been

supposed to have wandered there during one of the crusades, and never to have got any further, than of specimens of Turkish fortification. The whole place was very odd and unaccountable-looking, but altogether picturesque, and was, enlivened I cannot say, but coloured, by a grove of cypresses close by, waving, probably, above a Turkish burial-ground. Presently, also, the Hungarian bank appeared loth to be outdone by its Servian rival, and began also to sport its own hills, and give them a mountainy look, that seemed determined not to be outdone by any competition whatever; and numerous islands, which, although they spoiled the look of an immense lake, that the wide expanse of the great Danube had assumed, were so prettily covered with dense shrubs and low trees, all intertwined with the thickest canopies of creeping plants, and haunted by such gay and varied flights of waterfowl of every possible plumage, that it was difficult to quarrel with them, in spite of the audacity of their intrusion. On one of them stood a low stockaded redoubt, which looked so lost on that desert island, that I fancied it built by Robinson Crusoe, and almost expected to see him looking over its palisadoes, with his umbrella and his man Friday: it had

something or other, probably, to do, however, with a border post and guard-house that were visible opposite on the Hungarian bank.

Sometimes the Servian bank seemed determined to have the better of it, and put up low pleasing mountains, and stuck up a fort by way of a picture, with some old ruins close by, which I was told were Roman,—a piece of information immediately contradicted by a very positive old gentleman; but whether these ruins, and any other ruins, or fastnesses, or fortresses I further saw during my voyage, were really of Roman origin or not, was a matter of little moment to me when I got enthralled in the beauties of my passage down the stream; and I have often told you before how I hate to be accurate in such matters, and run away from all the pedantry of dry antiquarianism, when my fancies or illusions are likely to be wounded by it. But the Hungarian bank had evidently too much spirit to knock under; it quickly flung up its low mountains also, which were just as pleasantly covered with thick clumps of bushes, or even with woods, sweeping to their top: and thus on both sides we had soon a very picturesque range of hills, with all their adornments of valley and ravine, and cottages, and fields of Indian corn, and fantastically-shaped

mounds, and green hillocks; and all this was so frequently Scotch lake-like in its whole appearance, that you might have fancied yourself floating along the bosom of one of those beautiful "lochs," which you know how to love and to describe so well. Besides, if, on the one hand, the Servian shore decked itself with its minarets, and groves, and low villages, that looked fanciful enough, and animated itself with white-attired fishermen, who skirted the shore in cockle-shell looking boats, the Hungarian, on the other, was in no way behind with its white cottages, and churches with small cupolaed steeples, and wild-looking swineherds, with their numerous droves, which, if less poetical, were no less picturesque in the distance. All at once, however, both the banks, after withdrawing as if to reconnoitre, and leaving a large lake between them, burst up into high and precipitous mountains, which approached so directly upon each other, as though determined to come to an issue of their rivalry hand to hand, that all further course of the Danube appeared entirely obstructed by the immense towering flanks of mountain that hemmed it in.

As we neared Alt Moldava, however, which, as one of the largest Hungarian border villages on

the immediate banks of the river, looked animated enough with its embowered rows of houses and its guard-house on the shore, flanked with a stand of arms, and its border soldiers in their brown uniforms, doing their best to be wild and picturesque, we began to have a faint idea that we were to find a passage somehow or other; for the dark lofty precipitous portals of a gloomy defile opened gradually before our eyes, and bade us enter the most beautiful and romantic part of this noble river, which abounds in so many other scenes of romantic beauty.

So narrow appears this sudden cleft in the mountains, that, without much fantasy, it may be supposed that some earthquake or convulsion of nature has rent asunder the great masses before us, and left this gaping passage for the river's course. Whatever the force, however, of nature's might, it seems to have done its work but imperfectly; for we are told that reefs, or rather long buttresses of rock, which nature, when it formed the road, forgot to sweep away, will rise from the bosom of the stream upon our passage. In fact, on passing those portals, we are about to enter the wonderful gorge of the river, in which boil and whirl eternally the oft-mentioned "rapids of the Danube."

On the left side of this gigantic gate, stand perched upon a pinnacle of rocks immediately above the stream, the scattered and picturesque ruins of the old castle of Golumbacz, consisting of several towers connected by long lines of battlemented walls. From the summit of an almost inaccessible precipice, these ruins, although but a dead skeleton, seem to glower down in the spirit, as they did in life, upon the unhappy little village that crouches timidly at the foot of the rocks, looking like a wretched mouse in eternal dread of a gigantic owl above its head.

Here an obliging companion began making some not uninteresting remarks about the Roman foundations of the castle, and telling me romantic traditions about the imprisonment of the Empress Helena in the tallest of the tall old towers; and here, again, the positive old gentleman, who seemed born to be the evil genius of contradiction to the poetical youth, flatly denied the Roman origin, and "pished" and "pshawed" away the tradition with the utmost contempt. There were moments when I wished him in the traditionary place of the Empress Helena.

Before the very gates of the defile rises a huge rock, sloping upwards like a gigantic horn, and

looking as if, in spite of the work performed by nature, it were inclined, if it could, to stop up the gap, and forbid our entrance to the wonders of the enchanted caverns beyond; but, in spite of the whirling eddies caused by this Cerberus, who here wears the name of Babacai, in spite of the tossing of the stream occasioned by other hidden rocks below the surface of the water, the steamer plunges forward fearlessly; the portals are passed; and we enter the dark defile. "Enchanted cavern" did I call it? and full of enchantment, verily, is that wondrous defile: the very eagles that swoop down from their eyries, built far, far above in the precipitous mountain tops, as we rush on, look like spectre imps, half-bird, half-dragon, sent by the invisible magician to forbid our further course; they flap their wings and shriek angrily above our heads, and finding their purpose vain, soar sullenly up again to their nests upon the rocks.

In the commencement of my letter I have prepared you for the impossibility of giving you the feeblest painting in description of all the wonders of nature's beauties and nature's horrors which the voyage down this portion of the Danube presented us at every step, so rapidly and with such lavish profusion, that, before one short exclamation

of admiration, before even one little "Oh!" could leave the throat, another and still stronger was already on its heels and crushed it, ere it could escape upon the air. In truth, how paint all this wild and savage scenery, these monstrous cliffs on either side, rent from each other by a mighty convulsion, whose wounds made by that fearful blow have now been scarred over and covered with the most luxuriant bushwork? how paint these pinnacles, buttresses, and pillars of rock, that rear themselves up in the most fantastic shapes into the sky, all dentilated and carved into the most fanciful open-work of pointed pyramids or grotesquely castellated forms, and yet but the very cornices running along the roofs of the vast cathedrals and castles of rock, which arise in unintermittent succession? how paint all the fissures and caverns of these fantastic peaks, which may have formed retreats for the Danube pirates in past times, and are now used as temporary recesses for fishermen of that rocky shore? how paint the bushes and masses of creeping plants that tapestry, like hanging curtains, the entries of these dark holes, the streams of water that now burst from them down the precipitous flanks of rock? how paint the masses of forest trees that crown the highest over-

hanging rocks, the clumps of smaller slenderer trees that perch themselves here and there upon every terrace of rock, and almost every pinnacle of precipice, like crowns of feathers to those savage heads? how paint all the wild grimaces of the rocks, as they grinned at us in the most fanciful forms of gigantic human heads, or, tired of such childish sport, assumed the character of vast Gothic churches or great castles? how paint the rushing and the whirling of the waters as they hurried over sunken rocks, that now and then reared their heads above the stream, and tried to frighten us? how paint the reverberations of the many echoes—pardon me the bull!—that thundered back in angry voices the incessant splashing of our paddles, and yet, when my poetical companion—he of the traditions, not my gay little Frenchman; no, *he* would not have thought of such a thing—shouted aloud "*Es lebt ein Gott!*" ("There lives a God!") caught up devoutly the awful words, and sent them from rock to rock, from pinnacle to pinnacle, from mountain-top to mountain-top, in dying sound, as if they were sending them to the very furthermost ends of the earth? How paint—— But no, I should have to throw down my pen in despair, or tear the sheet

on which I write to you—an act of rebellion you would not permit; and so, however unwillingly, I give up the task.

There are two or three prominent features upon our water-course, however, that, if I cannot venture to describe them, I should have upon my conscience, did I not mention them to you in some detail. One of these was the cavern of Golumbacz, an immense gaping aperture, which yawned above our heads at the top of one of the highest and most precipitous flanks of rock, almost at the entry of the defile, and not very far from the ruins of the castle of the same name: it would not, perhaps, have attracted my attention more than the many other hundreds of vast caverns and fissures in the mountain sides, had it not been for a large mass of masonry which partly choked this huge mouth, and, being partially ruined, looked like its heavy lower jaw full of broken teeth.

My tradition-friend, after looking around to see that his enemy, the old gentleman of the eternal "Pshaws!" was not within hearing, informed me that popular belief attaches to this cavern the legend—which I afterwards found confirmed by Murray—that it was here St. George slew the dragon, the putrefying carcase of which has engendered,

even to the present day, the swarms of gnats which absolutely desolate a part of the country, and have the poisonous force of twenty mosquitoes concentrated in each one small insect. In consequence of this popular idea, the mass of masonry was built by the peasants to close up the cavern, the deep mysteries of which no one was ever able to explore, and thus to catch the gnats in a trap. But, as it appeared that the insects had more ways than one of getting out of the hole, if ever they were born in it, or that the dragon still retained his diabolical power of doing ill in spite of mortal masonry, when it was found that the plague of flies was not diminished by the experiment, the huge wall reared by popular fancy with so much labour, on the top of that almost inaccessible precipice, was allowed to fall into decay. I saw nothing and happily felt nothing of these "murder-gnats," as these devouring insects are called, although at times they are said to issue from the cavern in swarms that overcloud the whole atmosphere.

Another, and one of the most striking features of the passage, was the admirable road which runs along the whole left side of the defile, at some height above the water: it may vie as a stupendous work, in which the greatest difficulties

have been overcome, with some of the wondrous roads of the Alpine passes. Now it is blasted in the flat face of the rock, forming a huge madrepore channel in the apparently impenetrable surface, overhung by a ceiling of rock, and overhanging a steep precipice above the flood; now it crosses a gully or a space of shelving bank in a viaduct formed by a Titanic mass of terraced masonry,—ever a great and marvellous undertaking. Here and there were seen figures moving upon it, employed on the repair of the road; now and then came a cart, and again a body of peasants upon horseback, towing up a large laden boat, the size of which looked very disproportioned to their efforts: but, on the whole, it was not animated in a manner worthy of its dignity.

Without destroying a single feature of the picturesque, it added greatly to the interest of the defile on the whole of the left bank, and told a tale of future civilisation and prosperity to the country, that made my heart rejoice. On the Servian side no work of the kind has yet been undertaken; but there, even at this early part of our passage, traces were visible among the rocks of the holes into which the beams were inserted, that supported the great Trajan road.

But of this wonderful road of Roman ages, which was carried through the whole of this difficult defile, I shall have to speak further on, where its evident traces begin to be more boldly distinct; even the practical and sceptical "pshawing" old gentleman did not venture to deny its existence, although he brow-beat "young poetry" sadly about a few low ruins, visible at intervals among the rocks upon the Servian side, that were evidently —at all events, I chose to go on "poetry's" side, and believe them so—the remnants of a line of Roman fortifications, built for the defence of the road.

I speak of the "defile" until you will imagine that we were constantly pent up in a narrow passage of overhanging rocks and mountains. In fact, the greater part of our way lay through these romantic passes; but now and then we burst out, unexpectedly, upon a little mountain-lake, with shelving hilly banks and beautiful backgrounds of the richest mountain scenery, all lighted by a glorious sunlight, which had in vain endeavoured to penetrate our ravines; and again we might have sworn rash oaths that there was no possible outlet: but then we passed some headland cape, or some short mountain gorge; and then came into another lake, and then another, such

as you find in mountain basins in Switzerland, now smaller, now larger, but always exquisite in their wild loveliness. And upon these lakes were floating boats with white lateen-sails, such sails as children invariably sketch in their imaginary water-pieces, the pretty triangular sails of fancy; and, as we paddled past the boats, we found them full of Servians in their gay semi-Turkish attire: and then came heavy rowing-boats urged along by Wallachians in their white dress—for although the left bank still forms a part of Hungary, the population is almost entirely of Wallachian race in language, manners, and costume. Upon the hills, also, were a few Servian huts, thatched with boughs, and flocks of goats skipping from hillock to hillock, and from rock to rock, and young black-headed goat-herds in Greek jackets, piping, as if they were not real, but make-believe dressed up pictures of the pastoral, beneath a sycamore, or a shelf of verdure-curtained hill; and, after all these milder scenes, we rushed all at once again into the dark defiles.

Although we arrived at about four in the afternoon at Drenkova, yet, as there was a quantity of work to be done, and mysterious interchanges of papers to take place between the captain of

our steamer and that of a smaller one, which awaited us to convey us down the more difficult rapids and shallower reefs of the passage lower down the river, we were told that all this would take too much time to allow us to reach Orsova, as I had hoped, that day. The night promised to be bright and clear; but it was not the darkness of the twilight that was the obstacle that prevented our proceeding any further; the severe regulations of the military frontiers forbade the travelling after sundown; and, besides, there appeared to be numerous other complications of arrangements — sanitary, political, custom-house-appertaining, and I know not what besides, as well as military—that were to be satisfied, or, at all events, not dissatisfied, and that put a "veto" on our progress.

In my usual unpractical spirit, I never could understand why all these matters, if not removed, should not be wonderfully simplified and expedited; but, as I am a very ignoramus in such deep mysteries, I always make up my mind that all is for the best and wisest on such occasions; and, making a virtue of necessity, I was resolved to think that this delay was the pleasantest thing in the world that could have happened to us,

spite of my repugnance to passing another night upon the hospital-benches of the steamer, and that nothing could possibly be so agreeable as spending a lovely evening in the beautiful environs of Drenkova.

Drenkova, which I had imagined, as an important steamer station on the Hungarian bank, to have been at least a small town, turned out to be a solitary spot, enlivened only with a long, low, shabby-looking warehouse, and a still more wretched-looking inn, of no very inviting interior: but, as the steamer was our hotel as well as our home, —and, just at this juncture, we had two, out of which to choose as places of retreat, our old home and our new one of the morrow,—and as there was plenty of charm in all that nature had provided for our amusement, what did we need more? The little spot was situated on one of the wide basins of the river, on both banks of which sloped down charming mountains, richly covered with brushwood below and thick woods above.

On the hills behind the two houses composing the village were innumerable goats, that were browsing among fissures, or skipping, as if for no earthly purpose but for their especial amusement, from rock to rock. As there seemed no reason

whatever why we should not amuse ourselves after the same fashion, barring the browsing, "*le petit Français*" and myself declared it a charming pastime to go and goat it, also, among the hills. We climbed from hill to hill, from rock to rock, most hospitably welcomed by the savage goats, who received us as if they had known us all their lives. Ravines and valleys intersected our ascent sometimes, and led, we neither knew whither, nor cared.

The evening was so lovely, our path, although rugged, so charmingly intertwined with masses of creeping plants and wild vine, so sweetly scented with all sorts of wild flowers, and, when we reached a sort of rocky elevation, the views over the broad Danube and its wooded mountains, so wonderfully bright, and gay, and variegated, that we really seemed neither to know nor care whither our feet might lead us, or why we should not sit down there, and "build us tabernacles," and gaze for ever.

From the height on which we stood we looked down as impertinently and as disdainfully as little Jupiters upon the two steamers, which, however, were our "destiny" for the time, as we saw them below, side by side upon the bank, dancing, as it were, like a polka-couple in a flickering flood

of fire, caused by the reflexion of a splendid "Turner" sunset upon the rushing waters; they looked, in truth, so small, as to appear as if they had shrunk, all at once, from monsters into mice. They were swarming, however, like ant-hills, with bustle and animation: sailors and peasants, the former duskier objects, the latter in white dresses, were pushing to and fro upon the decks, upon the planks, upon the shore,—now moving somewhat more erectly with bales of wool, now bending beneath the weight of great sheets of iron, —now hurrying, now crawling and struggling; until the steamers got the unpleasant likeness, in my eyes, of two big, lazy summer-beetles covered with vermin.

As we, at last, roused ourselves from our contemplation, and began again to descend the mountain sides, we found that herds of cows and oxen were being driven home in the same direction. Whence they came, all at once, I could not make out, for, excepting the goats, we had thought ourselves far from all living things: all on a sudden, however, the mountain flanks were covered with these animals, that seemed to have started everywhere out of the bushes, like the warriors of Roderick Dhu, or, as they appeared to me in

the distance, like big dun moving mushrooms. The peasant boys who passed us on our descent as drivers of these herds, as well as all the straggling men we met returning from labour, when we reached the paths that led fancifully up and down hill to distant villages upon the river's banks, were all attired in the Wallachian costume, and gave evidence that the population of this frontier region of Hungary was entirely of Wallachian race.

I have already described this costume to you, in one of my letters from Pest, as still perfectly resembling that of the ancient Dacians of this part of the country in Roman days. Over their full white trousers they wore loose white tunics, or shirts, confined about their waists by leathern girdles; their feet were sandal-bound; on their rough, uncombed heads of black hair, they wore high caps of white, shaggy, disordered-looking wool fleeces, like mops, either pointed or slightly truncated.

The dress of the peasant-women was most extraordinary, and of so complicated a nature, that I shall find almost as much difficulty in describing it as my scenery. The first female of the kind on whom we stumbled on our path, was a pretty,

swarthy, black-eyed young woman, who was driving pigs, at the same time that she was spinning from a short distaff stuck into her girdle before her. Upon her head she wore a very complicated flat cap, of the shape of a small cream-cheese, which seemed to be composed of a quantity of pieces of cloth of every variety of colour, round in form, and somewhat resembling large coloured wafers laid one over the other, as you may have seen upon certain kinds of pen-wipers. This species of pad was laid upon the very back of the head, and bound on by a braided band, embroidered with various-coloured beads, across her forehead. Behind this singular and seemingly useless appendage hung down a mass of dark hair, trussed up, *chignon* fashion, in a quantity of loops. I ought to tell you, however, *en passant*, that I have since discovered that these masses of thickly woven hair are generally false, — what a singular species of coquetry in these mountain maids!—for I afterwards observed, that, while the hair on the top of the head and the bands in front were glossy black, these thick complications of wig behind were of a dirty red-brown colour, arising, probably, from their age, and their being burnt in the sun.

But, to return to my first specimen. A white shift, decorated about the upper part and the full sleeves with embroidery and spots of colour, worked in threads, was pulled tight over her swelling bosom by a broad leathern belt, worked also in a variety of patterns of the brightest shades, and descended to her heels. Before and behind her hung down two short aprons, woven of all possible colours, in all sorts of possible patterns, the many-coloured and variegated ends of the materials that composed their texture sweeping below, to the very ground, in long full fringes. Her feet were naked; but she stepped over the rugged points of the rough road, as one used to such wild exercise; and, to my surprise, the feet were white and delicately formed. Pig-driving and spinning were not, however, her only occupation, for, as she passed us, peeping out of the corners of her black eyes at the strangers, I saw behind her a sort of oblong basket, formed of the bark of trees, and also worked with that fanciful coloured embellishment of embroidery in thread-work which seemed so pre-eminently the fashion of the country; it was slung upon her shoulders by a broad band. Presently from this basket came a gentle wail; and then I found that the

basket was a cradle, and in the cradle was an infant, carefully covered over with a padded counterpane. The good woman, then, was pursuing the triple occupation of nursing, spinning, and pig-driving. As we chirped to the living baby in the bark basket, by way of a salutation, having no other language to express our interest, the fair peasant simpered, smiled, with a very naive sort of coquetry, looked out of the corners of her eyes, cast them down, looked again, and then throwing a glance behind her, suddenly hastened her steps. In fact, not far behind came an old woman, who tottered up quickly, as if she thought our chirpings objectionable, and cast no very benevolent eyes upon us as she went by. She was dressed in attire very similar to the younger peasant, and was also employed upon a distaff in her hand; but on her head she wore a flat swaddled headdress of white linen, that hung down on either side of her dark withered face; and her feet were bound up with coloured cloths, curiously sandalled together.

We either overtook or passed several other peasant women similarly dressed on our way; all of them, if not regularly pretty, were very striking-looking; and the great quantity and variety of

colour which prevailed over the whole costume with such lavish profusion gave them an infinitely variegated and picture-like look. The shifts of many were very thickly embroidered, more especially upon the seams and wide sleeves: two or three had similar cradles upon their backs. One woman had a quantity of Austrian *zwanzigers* hung below her cap, and down her neck behind, in a sort of net-work of coins. Coins, in fact, seemed constantly strung as necklaces or other ornaments in this part of Hungary, nearer the Turkish frontiers; and thus I first discovered the reason of so many *zwanzigers*, to be met with in the Austrian dominions, being pierced with holes: they are employed as head-dresses or other pieces of adornment by the peasant women, and, when their owners are obliged by circumstances to part with their ornaments, come again into circulation, and wander back into the German states. The history of such a *zwanziger* might form the subject of a curious tale.

On our road we were joined by others of our steamer passengers—"young poetry" and "old scepticism," who stuck to him like a living bur, among the number; and, in spite of the constant collisions of these two opposite elements, that

sometimes went so far as to threaten a storm, we all wandered on along the road up the river to a lovely border village, which looked as little military as possible in its snug and romantic retreat at the opening of a valley. Here we found our two gallant captains of the greater steamer and the lesser playing the "lion," and we thought, also, somewhat of the "pasha," among our fair mountain maids; certainly the hour, the glowing setting sun, the darkening twilight, the secluded village street, with its bowers of acacias and its murmuring mountain stream in the midst, were highly congenial to a soft love tale told in a fair damsel's ear.

The dusk had fallen when we left these pleasant scenes, and wandered homewards—that is to say, steamerwards—along our hill path; and more than once we were startled by the loud challenge of the border sentinels on our road, who cried "*Wer da?*" as if perfectly astonished at our impudence in daring to stroll after nightfall. When we reached the station-bank, an attempt to gather some wild peppermint, that grew on the foot of the hills, as a preventive against the incursions of certain disagreeable visitors that had much troubled my repose the night before, was impera-

tively forbidden by an angry sentinel, with an energy as if he thought that the safety of the border-ground, if not the existence of the whole Austrian empire, was about to be compromised by our audacious appetite for peppermint. I should have liked to have known what the good border-guard thought of my proceeding, what ill he surmised I was going to accomplish, whether to steal, or conceal, or lay a mine to blow up the guard-house; but, as I have told you, when I do by any chance have a fancy to know the causes of effects, I am sure to be baffled. The sentinel positively refused any elucidation of the mystery of his thoughts.

The night was so beautiful, under the influence of the increasing moon, and the dark pictures of the wood-clad hills, thrown into still darker relief by the bright glitter of the rushing moonlit waters, were so exquisitely, so soothingly lovely, that it was with difficulty we could be persuaded, in spite of the wrath of sentinels, to cross the plank to our steamers, which now lay still and dead in the moonlight, without fire, without light—mere uninviting logs. We were too kindly disposed to our old boat to choose the new one for our night quarters; but we were ill repaid for our attachment. We went to bed at last, but not to sleep.

Ask me not what had "murdered sleep." Ask me not what murder, upon countless enemies, I committed in revenge. And, at last, when I had fallen into a "fitful doze," we were roused, long before it was necessary, by "old scepticism," who was rushing about the cabin in a frenzy, at the earliest morning's dawn, clamouring about a lost "*bicchiere.*" I then first learnt that the old gentleman was an Italian, and a *savant*—too *savant*, it appeared, to know anything, or believe in what he did not—and for many a long day I shall owe a grudge to all Italian *savants*. Leaving him to clamour, I rose from my uneasy bed, and wondering how steamers—those active, living, struggling things—could lie so long asleep without even moving, I transferred myself and baggage to the smaller steamer, from the deck of which I had still time to gaze my fill upon the sweet wild basin of the hills of Drenkova.

At last we started; and, with my further voyage of that morning, commence again all my troubles of description. Pell-mell come the words to my pen, of mountains, precipices, forests, woods, ruins, rocks, ravines, narrow defiles,—over all, nature's most beautiful web of enchantment,—between all, the rushing, roaring, boiling flood: and

pell-mell only can I communicate to you the confused pictures of wondrous and sublime magnificence, that remain disorderedly impressed upon my memory in a constant string of shifting panoramas, that run and blend one into the other like colours upon a wet palate. Immediately below Drenkova we again entered a precipitous gorge of the river, where rapid succeeded rapid, and whirlpool succeeded whirlpool, and Scyllas and Charybdises were so mixed and confounded in a wild frantic dance, that there was no saying which was which.

Our steamer hurried on, sometimes shaking as if with an ague fit, sometimes seemingly suffering from a slight attack of convulsions, over such long, never-ending cauldrons of boiling, seething waters, that, could we have seen its copper keel, we should have been surprised not to discover it boiled as red as a lobster. Reefs of rocks, and breakers, and eddies, and roarings of waters heard from afar in those close defiles, were our constant sights and sounds. Now and then a bare-backed rock stood up more boldly from the waters, a visible and less treacherous enemy than the thousands that lurked in ambush beneath the stream; and all these rocks had the names of buffaloes or hippopotamuses, or

such big angry beasts; and verily, in the gloom, they might have been taken for the realities: others bore fanciful Wallachian or Servian names, that sounded wonderfully grand and sonorous, and probably had a meaning to them, had I but known Wallachian or Servian. The time was, and not very long ago, that the passage of all these whirlpools, and rapids, and reefs was considered impracticable for steam-boats; and the voyage was, until lately, performed in small boats: but now, thanks to what blasting has been able to be effected by the Hungarian steam-company, and a better knowledge of the gaps through which a steamer may be piloted, acquired during a drought, when a chart of these reefs was able to be formed, we steam down the Danube, although in a small vessel, boldly, unfearingly, safely.

As to the grimaces made by the rocky precipices the day before, they were fairly outdone by those of the passage of which I now speak: in grinning through a horse-collar, the defile below Drenkova would certainly have gained the prize over its rival above. You might study the recesses formed in the immense flanks of the precipices to all eternity, and always discover some new fantastic form depicted on them, as you may sit before a

coal fire, and trace castles and mills, and men and beasts and monsters, indescribable and unceasing, in the glowing embers. Ramparts formed of Cyclopean masses of rocky masonry, tremendous piles of battlements that seemed to form parts of a blown-up castle, and lie irregularly about like the fallen big tower of Heidelberg, rocks tossed around as if by the hands of Titans, and left in the most chaotic confusion, when the war was ceased with that heaven which they were vainly meant to reach, but to which they still aspire, confound the imagination, and put the brain into a perfect whirl; and yet all this savage wildness of nature is so sweetly softened down by groups of towering, slender trees on every terrace of rock, by such masses of hanging verdure, that the horrors are all entirely divested of the horrible; a beneficent fairy seems to have taken upon herself to throw a veil of brightness over the terrific palace built by a giant enchanter only to affright away the rash mortal intruder.

Again the steamer begins to toss and struggle in throes of convulsion; but a singular obtruding promontory, around which the water rushes and whirls most furiously, is passed,—the Promontory of Greben, it is called: the Danube suddenly re-

joices in its freedom in another widely-spreading lake, and adorns its bank, as if to *fëter* its regained liberty, with the loveliest wooded hills, and the most glaring burst of sunlight and love after the darkness and gloom of the ravine through which we have rushed on; and the steamer again glides on more smoothly on the quiet waters, as if in sympathy with the more peaceful scene around it. And no wonder; for a brighter, gayer scene than this lake-like basin can scarcely any lake in the world, be it in Switzerland, Scotland, or even Italy afford.

A green island, with a solitary white church upon its banks, studs the expanse of waters. On the Servian bank rises, at the foot of the hills, a pleasant little village, oriental in its style, built by Prince Milosch when in power, and called after his name. At the further extremity, two masses of towering white cliffs, which evidently form the portals of another defile as narrow as that which we have passed, tell us that this scene of quiet, peaceful loveliness will not be of long duration. On an advancing point of promontory, not far from this gigantic gateway, stand, on the Hungarian side, the remains of an ancient castle, three towers of which still defy the ravages of time, and

give to this ancient fortress the name of Tricule: two of these towers stand upon the cliff-like bank; the third rises from a rock in the midst of the river, and is connected with the mass of the old building by a bridge. It is still occupied as a station for the border military, as we can see by the sentinels, in their brown uniforms, who lounge beside the island tower, or peep over the walls upon the shore. But we soon paddle on beyond this old castle; and I shut my ears to the fresh dispute which "young poetry" and "old scepticism" again take up about Roman foundations, for we enter the defile announced by those towering white precipices, and all my senses are again absorbed in its beauties.

The defile of Kazan, if not narrower than that of which we have already overcome the difficulties, is at least loftier in its mountain flanks; and yet so narrow become, on a sudden, some of the passes of this ravine, that you cannot but wonder when and how all the vast mass of water has disappeared, and shudder at the thought of the depths below that must conceal it. So abruptly rise the precipitous cliffs from either side, that it is evident nature has here cut off all communication along the mighty river: there is not a hold for the feet

of a goat or a chamois along these steep walls, much less for the foot of mortal man. But for this very reason the pass of Kazan is to me the most interesting portion of the river; for on the Hungarian bank runs that stupendous road blasted in the rock of which I have already spoken, a long vast overarched gallery bored by the might and power, and intelligence of man, along a path where nature seemed to have imperiously pronounced the word "impossible!" and on the other bank arise, on every spot, distinct traces of that almost as mighty Roman road, which, nearly two thousand years ago, that wonderful people had constructed with an audacity and intelligence as great.

Powder that great nation had not to blast and bore; such modern facilities were unknown to them; but evidences still exist, as fresh as if formed but yesterday, of the manner in which that curious road was made: even "old scepticism" must hold his tongue; or, if he dare to wag it, no soul will listen to him. Along the whole line of precipitous rocks, upon the Servian bank, are to be seen square holes, as perfect in the hard rock as if they had been but recently chisselled; and the slightest comprehension may see at a

glance that the sockets were intended for the insertion of beams, to support a wooden towing-path and road of communication which ran through the whole series of these difficult passes. Above these square holes are still the traces, also, of ledges or grooves in the rock, cut for the further support of the road or for that of the roof, which apparently covered it along the whole extent. My mind positively stood confounded with wonder and admiration, and that comprehension of the greatness of the Romans, which Rome with all its vast remains was unable to convey to me; that enthusiasm into which, although fresh with all the classical recollections of my earlier youth, I had in vain endeavoured to lash myself in the "eternal city,"—in vain, indeed; I often think of my useless efforts at some degree of inspiration with a smile of regret,—I here found suddenly come over me.

Since I am speaking of this Roman road, I may mention now, although we have not yet arrived at it, the tablet which still exists, set in the rocky wall of the precipice, near the end of the defile, to commemorate the construction of the road. Although naturally defaced by time, and smoked over below by fires which the fishermen seem to be especially fond of lighting upon that terrace of

rock, yet, even as we hurried by in the steamer, we could plainly see the winged figures and dolphins that formed the supporters of the tablet, and the Roman eagle still soaring above; the letters of the inscription, which immortalised the great work of Trajan, we necessarily could not read; and upon this point we took the information of our pleasant and instructive guide-book for granted.

Where this extraordinary road existed in Roman times, the petty attempts of the poor fishermen who lurk in the recesses of the mountain flanks still contrive to keep up the communication of a path, which forms a strange, romantic, and picturesque contrast with the beauty and solidity of the great new road, so marvellously constructed on the Hungarian side of the river. Where the stony pathways up and down the great masses of rock become impracticable, little tottering bridges of plank, or of two or three trunks of trees, have been laid from precipice to precipice, over the ravines and chasms which sever the threads of the path.

It was almost a wonder that anything less active than a goat could use these narrow hanging bridges; but that they were used by mortal men was very evident, for figures of turbaned Servian

fishermen, in their half-Turkish attire, stood perched here and there among the rocks, gazing upon our steamer curiously as it passed, or leant out of their boats close by the bank to raise their suspended basket-like nets: and huts there were among the holes and crevices of the overhanging rocks, constructed only of a few boughs, the entrances of which were often tapestried over with rich masses of overhanging creeping plants, that, if they served not as doors, did duty at least as well as velvet *portières*: and in the water just beneath the rocks out of which peeped these strange nests, were boats sometimes covered with bark roofs, constructed so as to fashion little cabins; and then, perhaps, a curling cloud of smoke from behind a jutting screen of cliff told of a cooking fire; and, now and then, a wild, savage, and almost precipitous road scrambled down the whole flank of mountain from above, and seemed to indicate that it led to some better-fashioned home of the rude fishermen. Certainly the romantic defile of Kazan had a charm for me still greater, still more powerful, than any my glorious Danube had yet exercised upon me. It had lured me on from wonder to wonder, ever surpassing its own self at the very moment I thought its force of charms was spent.

You will be tired of all my rapids and rocks and reefs, and so I will say no more of all their obstructions and of all the manœuvres employed to avoid them during our passage of the Kazan. Before we leave the defile, however, I cannot pass over without mention that great cavern, barely visible in the rough escarpment of the mountain side to our left, shortly before we issue from it. It is at some height above the stream; a rugged path leads up to it; and its gaping entrance is almost concealed from us by a loop-holed rampart wall. It is known in the whole country round by the name of "Veterani's Cave;" for from this strange fastness it was, that, in the latter end of the seventeenth century, an imperialist general of that name defended, for a great length of time, the pass of Kazan against the Turks. The romantic existence and the heroic deeds of Veterani and his troops in this cavern form the ground-work for many a romantic tale; and certainly no spot was better suited for a story of modern chivalry. I have not seen the interior of this historical cave, but I am told that it is divided into several compartments, lighted by holes in the rock, that serve as windows to this extraordinary garrison.

From our marvellous defile we at last issued

once more upon another large basin of the Danube. On the right bank the Servian mountains still swept down in gentle slopes to the water's edge; on the other side lay a plain backed by the more distant mountains of Wallachia, and on the shore the small town of Orsova, the last place in Hungary, looking new and white and pleasant enough in the distance. Lateen-sailed boats were again picturesquely skimming along the waters. On the right bank, opposite to Orsova, a whole little army of white-attired Servians were fantastically grouped up and down a large mountain road, which they were employed in repairing: they dotted the heights like an immense flock of straying sheep.

On steaming up to the quay of Orsova, all the passengers were assailed by a variety of matters about passports and quarantine regulations. But, as it was here that my steamer course was run, and as with the extreme limits of Hungary, with Orsova and its environs, my Danube journey was ended, I had nothing to do with all those harassings of passengers going further down. My first purpose was to visit the romantic baths of Mehadia, which lie among the beautiful mountains forming the frontier limits between Hungary and Wallachia, not far from Orsova; and so, without giving a look at

my landing-place, I endeavoured as quickly as I could to get out of all the bustle and annoyance, and be off.

A variety of strange vehicles, half-carriage half-cart, without springs, filled with layers of scented rushes by way of a seat, were awaiting, like omnibusses at a railway station, any chance visitors to the baths. A bargain was soon struck in pantomime, since none of my known languages any longer served, with one of the wild-looking Wallachian drivers of such a verdant conveyance. Luggage was soon conveyed into it; and leaving the swarms of wranglers on the beach, I soon found myself rattling and jolting with my "*petit Français*" through the wide road-like streets of the new-built town, towards the baths of Mehadia.

LETTER XVII.

A FASHIONABLE BATHING-PLACE ON THE CONFINES OF HUNGARY.—MOTLEY SOCIETY.—ROAD FROM ORSOVA TO MEHADIA.—WALLACHIAN CARRIAGE AND DRIVER.—WALLACHIAN LANGUAGE.—GLEN LEADING TO MEHADIA.—THE BATHS.—BEAUTY OF THE POSITION OF MEHADIA.—MILITARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISITORS.—VIEWS FROM AN HOTEL BALCONY.—LINGERING GUESTS AT THE CLOSE OF THE BATHING SEASON.—DINNER.—EVENING RAMBLE UP THE VALLEY OF THE CSERNA.—ROMAN REMAINS OF THE THERMAE HERCULIS.—THE MINERAL SPRINGS.—MORNING SCENES.—A SOLDIER'S FUNERAL.—THE ECHOES AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.—MOUNTAIN RAMBLES.—THE CAVES OF HERCULES.—DEPARTURE FROM MEHADIA.—PICTURES ON THE ROAD.—THE GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.—THE FORD.—THE WALLACHIAN DRIVER.—APPROACH TO ORSOVA.—THE HOTEL OF THE HIRSCH.

THE mineral baths of Mehadia, which lie inland about twelve miles from the Danube's banks at Orsova, in a cleft of the mountains that divide Hungary from Wallachia, and may thus be supposed by most fine people in Europe to be at "the uttermost ends of the earth," are nevertheless a place of fashionable resort. Much as the eyes

of fashion's votaries at home may open at such a declaration, and the ears of fashion's votaries doubt the evidence of their own sense, and the noses of fashion's votaries turn up in disdain at such an idea, I will not abate an iota of the meaning of my epithet—the baths of Mehadia are a place of *fashionable* resort. Mehadia is the Baden-Baden of this part of Europe—the Baden-Baden as the fashionable place of rendezvous for summer loungers—the Baden-Baden as a spot of exquisite and romantic beauty. Not only is it the resort during the summer months of many Hungarians, and fine and fashionable Wallachian ladies and gentlemen from Bucharest, and wealthy Moldavian boyards from Jassy; but, mixed in the motley crowd during the season, may be found Bulgarians, Servians, Turks, Greeks, Poles, Russians, Germans, chiefly Austrians from Vienna, and even Circassians. In fact, the "world of fashion" exists now on the Turkish frontiers, as on either side of the Channel. I own I have not heard as yet of any *blasés* English fashionables spending the late summer months at Mehadia; and French people, who only of late years have ventured to cross the frontiers of "*la belle France*" as far as Baden, are out of the question: but I do not despair, in these days,

when Cairo has grown a drug, and even Timbuctoo no novelty, when Danube journeys have been rendered a very easy proceeding, of hearing that "a select party" have wandered as far as Mehadia, and given it a name in their own circle. Truly the accommodations are not of the best, in spite of the vast improvements made since the days of Mr. Paget and Murray's informant; but what will not certain people do for novelty's sake?

I had met with Hungarians returning from the baths, and had heard much of the strange, motley, but interesting, and even agreeable society assembled there during the height of the season. The bathing season, however, was unfortunately over, or nearly so, when I steamed down the Danube; but, much as I might regret the variegated scene of Mehadia in its summer glory, I had heard too much of the beauty of the situation of the baths, not to make them the object of an especial excursion.

The day was bright and fine, and the weather had relaxed from that overpowering heat which has marked the whole of this our summer of 1846; and a gentle breeze fanned us on our way, as we rattled across the plain in which stood

Orsova on the river's banks. We had rendered our seats beneath the wicker hood of our strange carriage-cart as comfortable as we could, on portmanteaus and bags carpeted with those scented rushes with which halls were strewn in times of yore for festivals; but I certainly should have preferred some other method of expressing their odour, than the constant bumpings up and down, which the jolting of our springless vehicle compelled us to adopt for that purpose, in spite of all the recalcitrant efforts we made against this mechanical process, by holding on to each other or to the sides of the cart with all our force.

Our rough-looking Wallachian driver was seated, or rather balanced, on a sort of bar before us, rather below the horses' tails—a position certainly of more questionable comfort than our own; and, in spite of that heavy, "hang-dog," Dacian look which he wore, as if to shew his faithful descent from the Dacians of old, he looked back at his temporary masters occasionally with a smile of kindliness in his dark grey eyes, and a nod of the head, as if to express that good-will by looks which he could not do by words. After a time, however, as we passed through one of those green nested villages, which abound every where in this

picturesque land, he burst forth, as if no longer able to contain the loquacity that burdened him, into a long account of some village adventure, that had lately taken place there. I shall never forget my astonishment when I discovered that I could make out the meaning of a great part of his discourse; I knew Wallachian,—I, who had not the remotest idea where or when I could have learned it; I almost began to think that the gift of the unknown tongues had fallen on me. In fact, half the man's words seemed modifications of the Italian, or rather of the Latin.

Latin, then, brought by the Romans into the midst of the Dacian population, formed a great part of the ground-work of the modern Wallachian. This bright discovery which I had suddenly made for myself, although I might have made it by my "Murray," had I given myself the trouble to look, greatly facilitated the mutual good-understanding of ourselves and our driver; for the good man was even far quicker at seizing the ideas of my distracting compound mixture of Latin and Italian, than I could be at unravelling his Wallachian. He nodded and grinned still more; and we managed to keep up a conversation,

of which, although three-fourths may have been unintelligible on both sides, a remaining fourth was sufficient to make us very good friends.

I had heard so much of the beauty of the road from Orsova to Mehadia, that I own I was greatly disappointed by the scenery around us. There was none of that savage romance about it that I had anticipated. The valley, through which we rattled after a time along a very good high-road, was wide, flanked by very tolerable mountains, and had a broad mountain stream flowing in the midst; but I saw nothing of much interest to enliven the way—so *blasé* had I become in mountain scenes—except the ruins of a long line of arched aqueduct, evidently, in its structure, of Turkish origin, and probably intended to convey the mineral waters of Mehadia to the banks of the Danube; they formed a striking and very picturesque feature at a hill foot to our left, as we passed close alongside them: and I was getting somewhat crusty with my disappointment, when suddenly my driver pointed his whip down a narrow gorge of the mountains on our right; presently we dashed over a bridge across a waterfall of the mountain stream which we had been skirting, and entered a narrow valley, which diminished

rapidly into a mere ravine overhung with enormous precipices.

Signs of civilisation, and care, and preparation for visitors, however, were visible every where in the trim road along the mountain flanks, and in the bridges, one of which was an ugly structure of cast iron, that crossed, here and there, the torrent. We passed the village of Mehadia proper, embowered as usual in luxuriant trees, with its guard-house, and granaries, and magazines,—for we were in the midst of all the regulations of the border lands. After some time we skirted the left bank of the torrent, wondering whether the ravine would not, at last, narrow itself to such cleft-like proportions, as to leave not so much as a chink for a mouse to crawl in at. At last came, on the left bank of the stream we were ascending, a few white lodging-houses, and bathing-houses, and other such suburban signs of a bathing-place, all nested in gardens and groves. Suddenly we whisked past a romantic church overhanging the steep bank of the mountain stream; we clattered over a high bridge thrown boldly from rock to rock, and behung with the richest tapestry of creeping plants; and we found ourselves at the top of the solitary street of the bathing-place,

which was jammed in between the steep side of an almost precipitous mountain, and the no less precipitous bank of the stream. Had we not known we were going to arrive at the mineral baths, the strong smell of sulphurous vapour which saluted us, and which had tainted the whole air of the ravine for some time before we reached them, would have fully persuaded us of the fact.

Upon the spot itself my expectations were fully realised, and even, as is usual in such cases, far surpassed. When nature really puts on her robe of romance, to say that previous expectations are "fulfilled," is to give oneself credit for an ardour and force of imagination, which few or none possess; and this is a species of vanity of which I will not render myself guilty. On occasions of visiting new scenes, I have always been either led into disappointment by the exaggerations of guide-books or tourists, or I have found my highest flights of imagination outdone: I have never arrived, beforehand, in my fancy, at a just and right appreciation. Perhaps, however, much of this seesaw of the fancy, always too high or too low, may depend upon the humour of the moment, the state of the spirits, or even—for such things

are, alas!—of the digestion, or upon the cloud or sunlight that flits over the scene. You must suppose, then, that I arrived at the baths of Mehadia in the best possible state of spirits and of bile, the weather using its brightest varnish to give the brightest possible colouring to the picture, for I take care to inform you beforehand that I am going into raptures.

Raptures in a letter, like a fit of hysterics in a companion, are rather too much for the patience and the nerves when they take one by surprise; when we are forewarned and prepared, they may be endured and watched with somewhat more calm and philosophy; and we may sympathise in them as little or as much as we like—sneer at them if we choose. And now you may take your choice. The wonders of this romantic and secluded spot, dropped, as it were, in a ravine-like valley, (and what a valley!) between a cleft of the highest mountains, (and what mountains!) walled in by fearful precipices, (and what precipices!) covered over with the vegetation of wood and forest, except where the tall, aspiring, white peaks of precipitous rock dart up into the sky above them, (an dwhat a vegetation!) are quite enough, however, to excuse all my raptures, I vow and protest to you.

To get you up to the height of my enthusiasm, I must go my old way to work, collect a few scattered words, such as those I have already used —narrow valley, rushing torrent, towering mountains, rugged precipices, waving woods, hazardous bridges, dark ravines, tossing waterfalls,—and bid you put them "into the pipe" of your imagination and smoke them, only warning you beforehand, that, however beautiful the opiatic cloudy picture you may blow, it will be far below the beauty of the reality. Are these raptures sufficient? For the time, at least. Let me proceed in a more quiet, orderly manner to work.

Previous descriptions had given me so poor an idea of the material comforts of the place, that I was taken by surprise by the neat and regular look of the only narrow street composing the little bathing village. I might have preferred, perhaps, lesser pretension, cottages and gardens, and, in fact, a more countrified and rural appearance, to the rows of great hotel-like houses,—barrack-like they might be called, were they not adorned with porticos and balconies,—that on your left stand beneath the almost overhanging mountain flanks, and on your right are propped up by masses of masonry, and terraces, and walls above the pre-

cipitous banks of the stream; but, although too town-like, this long street, with a fountain at its further end, and beyond in the vista a neat, unpretending, whitewashed chapel, crowning a green mound, round the sides of which wound the road further up the valley, had a comfortable and even pleasant look, which was not toc much at variance with the beauties of the scenery around—at all events, not half so much as I had expected. Even the long line of military hospital, at the further end of the street, to the left, with its groups of sickly-looking soldiers lounging and sitting before its stone steps, and pale mustached faces looking out of its low windows, interested, as well by the groups assembled about it, as by the beneficence of its institution. And then, half way down the street, on the same side, was a long line of building evidently intended for pleasuring, as might be seen by the scanty groups of smoking gentlemen, who still lingered before it, beneath the clumps of green acacias and limes. This house I afterwards learnt to be the *Conversations Haus*, containing the ball-rooms, assembly-rooms, dining-rooms, billiard-rooms, and all other such rooms necessary for the killing of the time or the refreshing of the bodies of loungers *aux eaux*, and,

if it wanted entirely all the elegance and magnificence of such temples for pleasure at Baden or Wiesbaden, doing duty in a very decent manner after its own more humble fashion.

Over all this I was able to cast my eye as we rattled up the street, and stopped at a building on our right, the awful Austrian double eagle over which proclaimed at once its official dignity, and its purpose of restricting, restraining, regulating—in fact, asserting its command over you, soul and body. In truth, the baths of Mehadia being within the territory of the military frontier, all its arrangements are subject to military law and military constraint: and we were not at liberty, we were told, to take a lodging for ourselves where we liked; we were to be "billetted off" as it might please the military administration in command of such matters. We had been driven, whether we would or no, to the office of the military *Verwalter* of Mehadia.

I had no mind whatever to grumble at this compulsory bestowal of our persons, for it saved us a host of trouble in seeking lodgings for ourselves; and so, after some ceremony, some questioning from the mustached gentleman who was to stow us away, some consulting of books, and

making entries, and rattling of keys, we were handed over to an attendant to be conducted to our domicile. The close of the season stood us in good stead, for most of the "guests" having boiled themselves sufficiently in the hot sulphurous springs, or having had their full *quantum* of pleasure or *ennui*, were flown to their many various lands; and we had a great many of the apartments of the lodging-houses, not at our choice, for that we were not allowed, but for our better accommodation.

In the height of the summer, a late-comer, I was told, had difficulty in finding a hole "where to lay his head." We were ushered up the stone staircases, and along the brick corridors of one of the largest houses at the entrance of the street, to two rooms on the first floor, with a balcony directly overlooking the romantic bridge, which led so boldly from the opposite side of the ravine to the street of the baths. Before us was a splendid panoramic view of all the rocky wonders of the other side of the valley; beneath us were groups of Wallachian peasants, and peasant wives, in that marvellous costume which I have already attempted to describe, and soldiers of different Austrian regiments in their gay uniforms, and servants,

hussars and pandours belonging to the few remaining guests, standing around the wares of a small market of fruit and vegetables, or lounging on the precipitous stone bridge overhanging the torrent, or moving up and down the stone steps that led down the rock-sides to the edge of the stream, to draw water in bright metal jars: to our right, in a narrow path further down the valley, was a little very narrow street of sheds, beneath avenues of trees, for which the space between the rocks and the stream-bank scarcely left room; in this were dimly visible forms of turbaned Turks, and Servians in gay attire, the vendors of the tobacco, and toys, and slippers, and sweetmeats, and other oriental wares, which were exposed in their temporary wooden shops: to our left lay the vista of the street.

My little companion, far less romantic and scenery-effect-loving than myself, had great difficulty in tearing me away from my lovely stone balcony, to attend to the duties of that toilet of ablution and decoration, which was necessary before descending into the street of a "fashionable" watering-place, and exposing ourselves to the public gaze of such "fashionables" as might be there to criticise. If this idea of French *convenance* had

not its full force upon my mind, at least another more material necessity had, in inducing me, at last, to obey his request. We had arrived at Mehadia early in the afternoon, but still at an hour when the habits of Hungarian early dining rendered a dinner already a matter of imperative consideration. What vanity did not suggest, hunger did.

Being equipped to the heart's content of my "*petit Français*," we found our way down the street to the *Conversations Haus*, being duly stared at, as new-comers, by the loungers, male and female—*élégants*, who might be of any race, as far as we could discover from their dress, and ladies all freshly attired in Parisian fashions, so as to be equally as unclassible,—who were still lingering in Mehadia. I generally fancy myself a very good distinguisher, even at a glance, of all the various nationalities of the best known European nations; but I own I grew at fault among the *soi-disant* fashionables of the Turkish frontiers; and so, probably, we stared and studied at each other as we passed, on both sides, in vain. The lingerers, certainly, were few; and in the partly closed shops, and the emptiness of the wooden rotunda, intended for that indispensable

accessory of bathing-places, a band of music, there were the most evident symptoms of the approaching close of the season: but, in spite of that, there was a tolerably pretty sprinkling of guests, as they now seemed to crawl out for rambles in the cooler air of the evening, after the dull process of digestion had probably been duly performed.

I have no right to criticise the cookery of the Mehadia dining-rooms, and declare that we found our dinner detestably bad, seeing that our unheard of late hour of dining, at five o'clock, might have been the cause of the sorriness of our meal; no Mehadian *restaurateur* could have been prepared for such an eccentric deviation from all possible times of dining: and so, without grumbling at our dinner, I will only say that we were intensely amused at one of the items in the bill of fare, which, written in one of those fantastic freaks in b's and p's that I have already mentioned to you, as common to German waiters, stood as follows: — "*Pöfalamoth.*" Admire our cleverness, I pray you, in discovering that this meant "*Bœuf à la mode!*"

The ceremony of dining being duly performed, we rambled quietly up the street towards the further recesses of the valley. In some of the

walls, and porticos, and colonnades of various buildings skirting the last houses of the street, to our right, were inserted tablets, with inscriptions in Latin characters, forming dedications to Mercury, and Venus, and Hercules, the deities supposed to have been particularly favourable to these baths in Roman days; for these waters, you must be aware, as it appears I have not told you so before, were known to the Romans; and the "Thermæ Herculis" had, more than seventeen centuries ago, a reputation far wider, probably, than have now the baths of Mehadia. Some of these Roman tablets and their sculptured figures seemed to me rather too fresh for a date so remote; but, as I had not "old scepticism" by my side to "Pish!" and "Pshaw!" and be disagreeable, I took it for granted, as I had been told, that they had all been found in various excavations made.

Stronger and stronger grew the sulphurous smell as we continued to penetrate further into the valley; and, every now and then, vapour began to float along the mountain stream: in fact, we shortly came upon the famous springs, with the various sheds, and houses, and bathing-huts established near them. Some of these springs spouted out of the bare rock at a little height above

our heads, and traversed the road to fall into the stream; others gushed up out of the very sides of the stream-bank, perhaps also from the bed of the torrent. We scrambled down the shelving bank to examine these mineral waters; of their qualities, and properties, and compound ingredients I can tell you nothing, still less about their degrees of Fahrenheit in heat, for in all such matters I am profoundly ignorant. One of these bubbling fountains, the principal and most wonder-working of the springs, I was told, was boiling hot, verily and truly *boiling:* as far as I could judge by a cooled glass of it, brought me by a good woman who emerged out of one of the bathing-huts, it was tasteless. Its next-door neighbour, removed from it by only two or three feet, was only lukewarm, and salt, to a very strong degree, to the tongue: not very far were others, also warm, but not of the boiling nature of the first, so evidently sulphurous as to be almost unapproachable, and betraying themselves to our sense of smelling as the offending spirits that tainted the whole lovely valley, even for miles down the stream, with that powerful odour of rotten eggs, that had bid us only follow our noses if we wished to find Mehadia without a guide.

I believe there were as many as two-and-twenty mineral springs, of different kinds, that poured out of the rocks immediately above the bed of the Cserna—for so the mountain stream is called; and, as it seemed probable that there was only one subterranean cauldron on the fire within the earth, for the concoction of all these various warm drinks, I was inclined to be as much astonished at their variety of kind, as I was, when a child, at the little cask of the conjuror, which produced from the same cock all sorts of wines that might be asked for by the company. Why should I doubt that all these medicines of nature, so wonderfully produced, are provided to work those wonders they are said to work in the cure of diseases?

Our evening ramble up the little valley, so narrowly enclosed in such high, fantastic, wood-clad mountains, was lovely in the extreme. Little waterfalls of the torrent-stream below us enlivened every turn; hanging bridges, for the accommodation of the bath visitors, led, at intervals, to the other side; benches, and grottoes, and verdant retreats were liberally fashioned and bestowed upon our path; groups of loungers were sitting here, or were perched there upon some bench

on a rock overhanging the stream; soldiers, German and Hungarian, in all the varieties of Austrian uniform, who had lost their more vulgar appearance in the air of sickness, that gave a touching look to their physiognomies, were wandering on our path, or sitting on the ledges of grass covered with wild flowers.

Crossing, at last, one of the remotest wooden bridges, lest we should wander into recesses of this enchanted valley from which some hidden fairy or magician would prevent our return, we found our way back to Mehadia, on the other side of the stream. On every terrace of rock were disposed little pavilions, or umbrella-like kiosks, or benches, overhanging the torrent, and commanding views up and down the valley; pathways were cut to wander in and out among the woods; steps conducted to loftier views, or to some inner secluded cleft in the mountain side; every where the vegetation was thick, luxuriant, and, except the pines upon the mountain-tops, southern in its aspect and its nature. Along these pleasant paths we wandered until night fell; and in its gloom we emerged from our wooded heights, and again crossed the stream to the miniature town.

Our accommodations were none of the most

magnificent in the interior of our rooms, our beds none of the softest; but the strict necessary was there, within those plain white-washed walls; and our sleep, although no "curtained sleep," was nevertheless profound from weariness, but calm, wholesome weariness of body, not of spirit; and had our beds been twice as hard, our washing-tables ten times as rude, our sleep far less refreshing, I should have been well repaid for any little evils of accommodation, by the beautiful views before me, as I again, early in the morning, stepped forth upon my balcony.

The sun had, perhaps, long since risen,—I love not to keep count of hours, unless when forced to it,—but, so narrow was the cleft of our ravine-like valley, that the sun was unable yet to penetrate it; in fact, I believe it never does, even at midsummer, until between ten and eleven of the forenoon. Now the whole valley lay in a pleasant misty shade; the white peaks alone of the summits of the precipices, as they darted upwards in fanciful shapes out of the dark green pine-woods, were illumined by the glare of the sunlight, while streaks of bright rays shot across the upper part of the gloom through crevices. Above us was the promise of a glorious day; in our little world

beneath, however fair and pleasant, were shade and darkness still.

As I looked and gazed upon this scene, I fancied it an emblem of our existence. It is thus in our glimmering twilight life that we see the far-off pinnacles of another world illumined by the beams of promise; there the Sun of Glory shines, but not to us below; and by what rugged paths, by what labour, by what sacrifices of self, are those pinnacles to be attained! It is thus that the inhabitant of far northern regions sees at noon only a streak of light upon the horizon, during his long night of winter, and thinks with longing on that summer which will come, when the sun will set no more! But, as I was getting into a somewhat dreamy moralising mood, my "*petit Français*" came behind me with his merry laugh and the banter of his gay spirits, and my dream was flown.

A scene, however, passed immediately afterwards beneath my window, which checked even his light thoughtlessness for a time. A bell had long been tolling heavily from the low steeple of the romantic church which stood upon the rocky height over the stream, on the other side of the bridge; and perhaps this sound had, unconsciously to myself,

contributed to sober my thoughts. Down the street came a long procession of people; the coffin, covered with a black pall that was borne aloft, told us that it was a funeral train. It was probably the funeral of a soldier that we witnessed; for behind the coffin came a long line of military; then followed a great crowd of peasants, of both sexes and all ages, chaunting low a mournful strain, then ceasing, then resuming it with breaks that added to the melancholy effect. As the whole procession turned over the high, rocky bridge towards the church, I could scarcely believe that the scene was one of reality. From the height where we stood at the window of our balcony, it had all the appearance of a melodramatic show upon the stage.

This mournful scene was accompanied at the same time by heavy sounds, that at first appeared to be the reverberations of repeated claps of thunder: echo after echo of this rumbling noise pealed up and down the narrow glen. Sometimes the reports which thus awakened the deep echoes and rolled into thunder, were sharp, sometimes louder and fuller. The former I found to be the shots from hunters in the mountains, the latter the noise of the explosions proceeding from the excavations

of a new road by powder. During the midst of the soldier's funeral procession, they had an awfully pealing sound of thunder, which added greatly to the saddening effect of the moving scene on which we gazed.

We had plenty of occupation, during the part of the day which we still spent in the lovely valley of Mehadia, in climbing about the mountains directly behind the houses of the baths, on our side of the stream. Roads are fashioned for the visitors, with much art, ingenuity, and labour, up the mountain sides amidst woods and rocks. Sometimes we arrived unexpectedly upon a gallery placed over the summit of a precipice, and commanding a wonderful view of the valley, and stream, and small white houses beneath—sometimes upon a temple perched upon a mountain pinnacle, affording a panorama still more extensive over mountain and forest: then came long wooden viaducts and bridges, thrown from rock to rock, and connecting unexpected deep ravines; and then a flight of steps wound up a narrow cleft, like the gangway to a fortified castle; presently we stumbled, in surprise, upon a little valley or glen, half way up the mountain side, all laid out with flower-gardens and clumps of bushes, in the midst of encircling forest

trees, like a piece of a park *orné* dropped there by mistake—a veritable oasis in the wilds; and here and there were tablets and inscriptions cut in the rocks, the records of grateful visitors for the health they had recovered, or the pleasure they had enjoyed; some were in German, most in letters of the Sclavonic alphabet; one was in modern Greek. Everywhere, upon spots where they were most wanted, benches invited to repose. Up and down the rocks, in the lower regions, were swarming countless gay lizards; higher up among the woods several bright, large serpents, seemingly of the most harmless description, crossed our path. The bath administration has done wonders by art, you see, to allure visitors to Mehadia, and has afforded the best facilities for admiring the more powerful wonders of nature; even the little "creeping things innumerable" were so bright and pretty, that scarcely the most sensitive lady could have quarrelled with them.

Above in the mountains were numerous caverns in the rocks, the branching recesses of which we had not time nor will to penetrate. An almost endless flight of steps, cut in the rock, led us up to a large cavern of this kind, divided into several compartments, the floors of which were of white

chalk, as hard as marble; the various openings to the air in them afforded us some of the most splendid views we had yet seen. An inscription over the entrance told us that we had here stumbled upon the "*Hercules Höhle*," the cave of Hercules, of which we had heard much mention; and as we had disdained the company of a guide among the beauties of Mehadia, in order to ramble at our ease, making up our minds rather to miss the sight of any notorious "lion" than to take a tiresome "keeper" with us to shew the lions off with cut and dried jargon, we were as proud of our discovery as if we had been the first to make it. Whether this cavern obtained its name in Roman times, from the superstition that placed the abode of the unwieldy demi-god in this vast hole, or whether from the fact of its being the residence of a robber in more modern times, who had assumed the name of the hero of the place to give himself a more terrific renown, may be a subject of dispute to indigenous antiquaries; but it was a matter of little moment to me; I chose, in sheer wilfulness, to support the first supposition—controvert me who would!

As we descended from our heights down the steep roads and rocky slopes, we came upon traces

of blood for some distance, which might have led us to suppose that the traditional brigand still existed in the caverns, and that the assassination of some unlucky wanderer, like ourselves, had been committed, had we not overtaken a party of hunters, who were carrying down to the valley two bleeding chamois in triumph. And at length we reached the baths once more, pleasantly wearied with our rambles amidst the wondrous scenery.

Days might have been charmingly spent in this lovely valley, but, somehow or other, tourists are sure to be always in a hurry when they least wish it; and so we determined to quit the place, although with regret, the same evening, in order to reach Orsova again that night. A carriage similar to that which had conveyed us to Mehadia, and driver even still more good-tempered looking, were soon procured; and we started down our glen, gazing upon its beautiful passes, which we saw perhaps for the last time, with lingering looks. *Blaśé* I had certainly not been now, by the beautiful scenes we had seen; for, as we emerged at last into the wider valley out of the ravine of Mehadia, I was far more disposed to enjoy than I had been when I passed through it the day before. I expected less, and I found far

more. The glowing sun-set which tinted our pictures did its best, I own, to heighten every illusion: a bright moon near its full struggled with the setting sun for mastery of light, and, when the greater luminary was vanquished and sunk, asserted its triumph most gloriously. Amphitheatres of mountains at first surrounded our way, and frequently hemmed our road in the distance, as if we were to go no further without climbing over them.

In one spot we came upon a gipsy encampment, established on a rocky platform above a hill side, to the right of our road. Low tents dotted the eminence; and from their side rose up the smoke of a large fire, circling in grey clouds into the glowing evening air: no scene could be more picturesque. Five or six little girls, of the most striking gipsy beauty, with large, black Circassian eyes, black heads of hair, and deep olive-brown complexions, came running down the steep hill-side, to beg of us as we passed. Their dress was as picturesque as themselves. Their white shifts, that formed their only garment, were embroidered in Wallachian fashion, and bound round their waists with many-coloured scarfs, that hung in knotted ends to the ground. Turbans of bright

colours, the red predominating, were wound round their heads, and braided in amidst their hair: in the front of this head-dress were stuck little leaden crescents, of which I would have gladly known the meaning, but, of course, could not learn.

Presently, again, we came upon a ford of the river which ran along the whole of our road to our left. Here groups of peasants were wading through the water, driving flocks and herds before them; and the struggles of some of the cattle against entering the stream reminded me forcibly of one of those Berghem pictures which hung upon the old oak-panelling of the antiquated country-house of our grandfather: the groups of those men and animals who had already waded through the ford were winding up the steep side of the mountain, on the other bank, by an almost invisible path along the face of the flat precipice, towards a village scarcely discernible among the recesses of a ravine. Picture after picture attended us on our way; but, alas! I cannot stop to paint them all to you; and our coachman hurries on, lashing, dashing, tearing, remorseless how we may be jolted, nor caring where we may wish to linger, as if he were a genuine Hungarian, instead of a Wallachian.

Let me say, *en passant*, that, although I had always heard the very worst character of the Wallachians throughout Hungary, I had every reason to be content with the only two specimens of the race with whom I had to deal. Our road was skirted, during a great part of our way, with pleasant fields of Turkish corn and tobacco, but more especially with teeming vineyards, surrounded by orchards of fruit-trees. Suddenly our driver stopped, laughed, gesticulated violently, and, before I could either discover the sense of his words or his pantomime, sprung from his box over a hedge, and into the midst of a vineyard; in a short time he returned, with his broad Hungarian hat, for he did not wear the Dacian cap, well lined with vine leaves, and filled to overflowing with big bunches of ripe grapes and apricots, which he brought to us, with a broad grin upon his face, as an offering. I expostulated with the man, in Italian, upon his theft; he seemed to understand me, for he shook his head, again gesticulated violently, pointed to a cottage ensconced among some trees, and seemed very eager to tell us that the house and fields either belonged to himself or some one of his acquaintance. As our driver's conscience seemed very easy, although I had some doubt about the latitude of a

Wallachian's conscience in matters of larceny, we quieted our own, and enjoyed very peacefully our delicious meal of fruit, in which the man, however, refused to participate. I made up my mind that this little freak was a spontaneous dictate of his kind-heartedness and hospitality.

When we at length emerged into the wider plain, the night had already fallen, but the course of the Danube was plainly traced by the lengthy flood of mist that hung over it: on the Servian mountains, upon the further bank, numerous fires dotted the whole background, like big glowworms. At last we rattled through the streets, or rather roads, of the new town of Orsova, which, only since the days of Danube steaming, has risen from a miserable village to the comparative distinction of a little town. We had been informed that "a grand hotel," called the "Hirsch," was to welcome us to its magnificence on our arrival; so miserable, however, was the aspect of the low building before which our driver stopped, that we were convinced the man had made a mistake. We insisted upon it that he was deceiving us; we inquired for "the Hirsch!"—"the Hirsch!"

Alas! the mistake was in our own illusions. The "Hirsch" was before us; that low, cottage-

like building was the "grand hotel" of Orsova. However, in spite of chincked white-washed walls, and one small round cracked, looking-glass, and broken planks for flooring, and a deal table with a cracked pie-dish for a washing-basin, and uncurtained windows that looked on one side into a narrow street, on the other into a dirty court-yard, and the broken gallery that formed the exit on the latter side, and the broken stone steps that descended into the street from a crazy door on the other, we thought that people might make themselves comfortable, without much ado, when they have a little tact, and can "make up their minds:" and that is what we did, ay! even "*le petit Français*," Parisian Sybarite as he was, also; but before we retired to our respective couches, which, at least, were cleanly sheeted, we lounged down to the Danube's banks, to greet again my love, from which I had been separated for so many hours, and which was swimming, and singing, and rejoicing in a great flood of moonlight to welcome my return.

LETTER XVIII.

PROPOSED EXCURSION TO THE IRON GATE.—DIFFICULTIES AND DELAYS.—A GUARDIAN SPIRIT.—THE PARLATORIUM OF ORSOVA.—CURIOUS MARKETING ARRANGEMENTS, AND MARKET SCENES.—WALLACHIAN WOMEN.—OFFICIAL EXCURSION DOWN THE DANUBE BELOW ORSOVA.—THE FORTRESS ISLAND OF NEW ORSOVA.—THE RESIDENCE OF THE PASHA.—THE OWL.—INTERIOR OF THE FORTRESS AND TOWN.—SCENES BY THE WATER SIDE.—THE BOUNDARIES OF HUNGARY AND WALLACHIA.—THE RAPIDS OF THE IRON GATE.—DISAPPOINTMENT.—FISHERIES BELOW THE RAPIDS.—PROGRESS UP THE STREAM BY TOWING.—THE FORT ELIZABETH.—LIVING SCENES ALONG THE SERVIAN SHORE.—ARRIVAL BY SUNSET AT ORSOVA.—DEPARTURE.—THE LITTLE FRENCH BOY.—RETURN UP THE DANUBE.

ALTHOUGH Orsova, being the last Hungarian town upon the Wallachian frontiers, formed, properly speaking, the limit of my proposed Danube journey, yet there were two or three objects of interest in the immediate neighbourhood to be seen, which, although beyond the borders of Hungary and the Austrian dominions, were not to be overlooked when so near at hand. Among these

matters was the far-famed reef of rocks in the Danube called the "Iron Gate," the last and at the same time the most formidable and dangerous obstruction to the navigation of the stream; but, to pay this spot a visit, which would take us completely upon Turkish ground, it was necessary to go, once more, through a quantity of official regulations, not only with the authorities appertaining to the quarantine establishment, but with the custom-house authorities and the military authorities of the borders. A great part of the morning, then, was spent in running about from commander to custom-house officer, from quarantine supervisor to commander again: there were passports to be *visés*, and permissions to be written, and papers to be signed by one authority, and then sent back to be countersigned by another, and other unintelligible entries to be written, and rewritten, and protocolled, and minuted—in short, all those interminable hindrances to be overcome, which Austrian regulations raise up before the impatient feet of curious wanderers.

The excursion before us was one which was likely to occupy the greater part of the day; and, as, among the many other obligations, the obligation of returning before the close of day was

announced to us as one of imperative necessity, unless we meant to be clapped into the lazaret for ten days, or be arrested as suspected smugglers by the custom-house guard, there seemed at first to be not much chance of accomplishing our object. Government boatmen were also to be provided, and quarantine officers, to be summoned to attend us on our excursion—all as a matter of form, since, as I told you with regard to Belgrade, the spirit of the law was of little concern, the letter only was to be observed: and while we thus hurried from one office, adorned with a sign of the Austrian eagle, and streaked with the dirty yellow and black stripes of the Austrian colours upon the shutters and posts and railings, to another similarly decorated, first on one side, then on the other of the road-like main-street of the small town of Orsova,—while thus bandied and battle-door and shuttle-cocked about backwards and forwards from authority to authority, without any prospect of a termination to our interminable ceremonies, — I began to calculate that we should just get our work done in time to be able *not* to make our excursion before the specified time. I was standing, for the third time, I believe, in the court-yard of the house

of the commandant, making up my mind to this happy *dénouement* of our affairs, when, from an upper gallery, I saw a pair of bright eyes gleaming down upon us from a very pretty face, and recognised a fair damsel who had been one of our fellow-passengers in our voyage from Semlin to Orsova. A greeting ensued; and to what results will not passing flirtations on steamboats lead? Let this be a consideration to all future tourists on Danube steamers: let them flirt with every pretty damsel they meet, if they have anything afterwards to do with Austrian authorities—and if not, let them flirt all the same—for our bright-eyed young fellow-delinquent in the abominations of flirtations proved to be the niece, the very own live niece, of the military commander of Orsova.

No sooner had we, like two Romeos, beneath that wooden balcony, explained our dilemmas to our Juliet, than she waved her hand encouragingly, and disappeared. A female voice was soon heard "sweetly murmuring" from the inner recesses of the awful office; and *cé que femme veut, veulent les autorités Autrichiennes*, it would appear, for our papers were immediately taken from us; we were requested by a stout mustached old gentle-

man to give ourselves no further trouble: half a dozen soldiers and non-commissioned officers were sent flying in double speed in all directions; and we were informed, that, upon going down to the quay in about half an hour, we should find boats, boatmen, quarantine-officers, and *tutti quanti*, ready to do our bidding. How we blessed those bright eyes, and vowed for the future to allow no opportunities for flirtations to pass unemployed!

During the preparations that were being made for our excursion, we had time to visit that extraordinary market-place of Orsova, called the *Parlatorium*. This covered market consists of a large, long, low shed, situated at a little distance from the town down the stream, and immediately upon the Danube's banks: it is surrounded by a large court, enclosed in a walling of planks, the issues of which are guarded by sentinels. On entering beneath the market-shed, we found the covered space divided, first by a large wooden partition, running breast-high along the whole length, then subdivided in the further space into two other compartments. These pens were constructed, it appeared, for the purpose of severing from each other the Wallachians from the neighbouring border, and the Servians and Turks from the

opposite shore, and both from the subjects of the Austrian dominions, in order that they may not come into contact, contrary to all established quarantine regulations.

The Wallachians, I was told, were escorted each market-day, *en masse*, from the neighbouring frontier by a body of soldiers. The Turks and Servians arrived in their boats to the very side of their cage. Quarantine officers were very busy among the peasants of the Hungarian territory and townspeople of Orsova, as we came in; and soldiers were lounging up and down, muskets on arm and bayonets fixed, as if determined to make carnage among the animals in the pens, should any obstruction be offered to the observances of the quarantine. The white fleecy-headed sheep in the Wallachian pen seemed to be few and poor. In the Servian pen the sheep looked more like wolves, without even sheep's clothing, for they consisted chiefly of swarthy Turks, with sharp, cunning, devilish-looking black eyes, who had their wares spread out upon boards attached to the partition before them.

There were Turkish soldiers from the neighbouring fortress-islands, with piles of grapes and big green water-melons, cultivated probably in the

little plots of ground allotted to them in their island fortresses; and petty merchants there were in full turbaned Turkish costume, not only with heaps of vegetables, fruit, onions, melons, or fish before them, but with stores of perfumery, soaps, embroidered caps and slippers, pipe-bowls, amber pipe-heads, and other small oriental merchandise of the kind. The whole scene was busy, variegated, and highly picturesque; and the strange arrangement of this curious market-place was amusing enough to witness. A tolerably thriving business of buying and selling seemed also to be going on; but there was less of animation, in the whole odd proceeding of thus separating buyers and sellers, less, in fact, of that shouting, screaming, and screeching excitement in bartering and bargaining across the partitions, which none were allowed to approach too closely, than I had been led to expect.

Of all the assembled races, I observed, to my surprise, that the genuine Turks, from whom I expected a species of apathy, gesticulated, pantomimed, and rolled their eyes the most. It would appear, in fact, that,—in spite of the wares sold and bought being invariably handed over by the sub-officers on duty to the purchasers, as if,

indeed, the military were exempt, by especial grace, from catching the imaginary plague, and in spite of the formality of the money being taken by those gentry in a wooden spoon, and passed through a bowl of vinegar before it was delivered to the vendor, as if copper and silver were more susceptible of contagion than cabbages or sturgeons or Turkish slippers, being duly gone through, —the rigours of the quarantine were somewhat lax at this time, for there seemed to be no scruple whatever in the transfer of the articles, provided they had once passed through the purifying fingers of the privileged soldiery. There was no fumigation or other purification used; and here, as elsewhere, *form* alone seemed the order of the day. There was movement, bustle, and oddity enough, however, about these marketing manœuvres, to render the quarter of an hour we spent in the "Parlatorium" of Orsova as well spent a quarter of an hour in amusement and interest as might be.

When we returned to the quay of Orsova, we found boat and boatmen ready, along with the necessary quarantine officials: there were three of them, looking wonderfully fierce, like Parisian police officers on duty, in order to keep us two poor wan-

derers in order, and seemingly determined, like the said police officers on all occasions, to find out something direfully bad in all our proceedings, whatever they might be. They turned out, however, to be chatty, well-informed men enough, who enlivened our excursion pleasantly, excepting one crusty old fellow in his official cap, who seemed to think laxity in quarantine matters a heinous crime, and smoked a short pipe and growled, and, when we spoke to him, growled and puffed at his short pipe still more.

Upon the bank of the river a fruit and vegetable market was established, with a long line of Wallachian peasant women in their highly picturesque attire. As we stepped into our boat we could not but pause and look at some of the component parts of this striking group of women. One of these market-women, with a basket of onions before her, wore across her forehead a string of coins, that hung also in grape-like clusters down her temples: this glittering fillet fastened together the curious head-dress made of pieces of coloured cloth, and the big coil of hair behind. Her feet were wrapped in a quantity of cloth rags, of different colours, sandalled round the ankles with leathern thongs. In a very little basket-cradle of bark at

her back was a very little child, which she cradled, by rocking continually backwards and forwards, to the right and to the left, as she sat, with the incessant restless movement of a wild beast in its cage. A piece of white linen had been attached to the back part of her *coiffure*, and, covering the cradle like a veil, shaded the baby from the sun. As we still stood and looked at her, she was aware, probably, of some agitation in the region of the basket, for, with a hitching movement of her shoulders, and without the use of her hands, she slung the small cradle before her; and, without exhibiting the least feeling of reserve before so many strangers, she opened her embroidered shift in front, and "nursed," in public, the infant, the mouth of which had, by these manœuvres, come just to its proper place.

Among the other fruit-women was one, also, whose exceeding and commanding beauty might have rendered her an admirable model to a painter, for a Juno, or Minerva, or rather, in her oriental character, for a Judith. She formed one of those striking pictures in living nature, which, like the "Transfiguration" of Raphael, or the "Assumption of the Virgin" by Titian, in art, once seen, can never be forgotten. A full twisted band

of white and red stuff braided together was passed over her brow; the mass of false wig which she wore behind, and which, alas! for my picture, was rusted by exposure, and formed a faded contrast with her own natural glossy black hair, was intertwined about a similar coil. She seemed fully unconscious of her wondrous beauty, and as indifferent as possible to our gaze of admiration.

The stream of the Danube was vast and broad, as we now floated downwards; high receding mountains adorned each bank, but the scenery was tame and flat compared to that of the defiles through which we had passed above Orsova. In a very short space of time the rapidity of the stream had brought us near an island, surrounded with fortified walls, rising from the very water's edge. The groves of cypresses and poplars, and thicker, rounder trees, which rose in clusters behind the walls, gave the island a charming appearance at a little distance: as we approached, however, we found the fortifications dilapidated, the walls all ruined and falling in heavy masses of stonework into the stream; but yet, even in this aspect of decay and desolation, there was that picturesque air, which decay and desolation often wear, thrown over the whole.

Although far nearer to the left bank of the river than to the right, or Turkish shore, the island of New Orsova is still a Turkish fortress in the possession of the Turks. Originally of Austrian construction, it was taken by the Turks, then stormed and retaken by the Austrians, and at last ceded by the latter to the Turks once more, when the Imperialist troops were required elsewhere, but upon the condition that the fortifications should never be repaired, but allowed to fall into ruin, and then, at last, evacuated by the garrison.

The fortress, also, nearly opposite to the island, called Fort Elizabeth, rising up the rocky Servian bank, which looks, with its square battlemented heavy towers, springing one out of the other, in stories, smaller and smaller, like a great house built of packs of cards, was also of Austrian construction, and has undergone a similar fate upon similar conditions to the fortress of New Orsova. The island was in command of a pasha; and we hoped, if possible, to pay a visit to His Excellency, at all events, to see somewhat of the interior of this Turkish garrison.

We glided to a landing-place on the island, where, behind a clump of dark cypresses, rose a

very shabby, scraggy-looking minaret of wood: to our left stood an accumulation of wooden buildings, growing like rank weeds directly out of the walls of the outer fortifications, and looking top-heavy with their huge wooden shelving balconies; they bent in a tottering state over the cannon-holes below, and were surmounted by a long line of strange trellis-work of wood, cut and carved into a thousand Turkish shapes, and falling, in patches, into cuttings and carvings of decay still more fantastic. This, we were told, had been the habitation of the women of the previous pasha in command: what sort of an abode it may have afforded in their day—poor prisoners!—it would be an uncomfortable thought to conjecture; now, at all events, it was almost roofless.

Advancing along our little landing-place, we entered a strange rickety building to our left, connected with the line of roofless shed we had observed upon the fortress walls. Within we found a small court, surrounded with those very precarious wooden galleries and deformed outer staircases, which we might have supposed, from what we had already seen, indispensable to the residences of Turkish pashas. Slicing off one corner of it, and advancing, as if with some pride

of its superiority, stood, apart, a square wooden building, looking very much like a deserted kiosk in a fancy garden, kindly given up to the accommodation of homeless spiders and caterpillars. A slippery paved stone platform conducted, here alone, to the entrance of this seemingly abandoned summer-house: this building was the private residence of the Pasha in command. Separated from the court by a wall of planks, we saw the shattered roof and upper part of a windowless house, which we were informed was the abode of the Pasha's wife—wife, I say, in the singular number, since it seems that the governor of New Orsova was only of that inferior rank, which is allowed, by the present Turkish military regulations, but one wife at a time. This corner of the palace, devoted to the feminine graces of the lady Pasha, looked more like a wall of piled wood in a French wood-yard, than a habitable building. I trust the good lady was more comfortably accommodated inside.

As we still stared about us, a very shabby, shambling, back-bent, bearded, little man, dressed like a Turk on a fourth-rate provincial stage in England, if not before a show at a fair, came out to us, from a low, mysterious hole under one of

the tumble-down galleries; and to him the *contumatz* officer who accompanied us introduced us as the Pasha's interpreter *en titre*. We found out at the same time that he was no Turk at all, but only a very dirty German—but whether a renegade or not, after-circumstances did not divulge to us. This tattered dragoman stared at us with half-opened eyes, and remained, for a long time, thus blinking, with a stupid, heavy look, and without speaking, as if just aroused out of a profound sleep: but, as I afterwards found that he retained the same expression "unaltered and unimpaired," as long as he remained with us, that is to say, as long as we lingered on the island, I came to the conclusion, that this owl-like look was a gift of nature, or, if not, acquired by his owl-like habit of living so long among ruined walls. With difficulty we at length dragged out of this pseudo-Turk's recalcitrant mouth, that, as the Ramazan was still in full force, the Pasha was at present at his prayers in the mosque, to perform his duties of the solemn fast, and that, if we did not wait for two or three hours, we could not be favoured with that interview with his devout excellency which we had anticipated.

As my fate, this year, seemed set against my

being gratified with a look at a pasha, nothing else was to be done but to console ourselves, as best we might, with an inspection of the interior of the fortress and the island; and to this task we proceeded forthwith.

Under the guidance of the "owl," who was far less prodigal of his discourse than the Vizier's owls we read of in the Eastern fable, and never even so much as moralised upon the ruins around him, we wandered on towards the lower part of the island, through the midst of masses of half-fallen fortifications, and over muddy green-be-grown moats, and over wooden bridges, upon which we were obliged to balance ourselves, as the spirits of the dead are said to do over the blade-like passage that leads to the Indian Paradise, so loose were the planks, or rather beams, of which they were constructed. These materials, as we trod on them, generally started up erect at the further end, and then clashed down again, leaving large holes between each other; or they gaped with unexpected openings, like pitfalls made on purpose for the entrapment of our feet and ankles—a very novel and facetious system of fortification, by the way. And then we passed through gate-ways, flanked by strange, tottering, mouldy-look-

ing walls, and under dark vaulted passages that looked mouldier still, or, if they did not look it, smelt it, with a wonderful cheesy odour; and then we went, ever and anon, through other gateways and over other slimy moats, across other waddling bridges, that slipped, and rolled, and turned over themselves beneath our feet; and thus we came into what was dignifiedly called "the town."

At first "the town" seemed to be devoid of habitations, and to consist only of long lines of white walls, looking desolate and dreary enough, topped, however, very greenly and pleasantly with vines, intertwined over all sorts of trellis-work of poles, and allowing the fruit to hang in rich and tempting clusters down the walls, just out of reach: the bare skeleton bodies below looked as if they had got young heads on their shoulders, covered with the fullest tresses, and adorned with clustering gems. Here we began to meet a quantity of Turkish soldiers, looking very uncomfortable, and waddling very ill at their ease, in European military frock-coats, and hideously made white trousers; and a quantity of little Turkish children with shaven heads, natives of the military colony,—natives and eternal exiles, like Parias, on the

island; for we were told that all the children born in the island were destined to become soldiers in their turn, and were condemned never to quit the fortress, except in marketings to Orsova, or visits to their comrades in the "Fort Elizabeth," or in another fortress lower down the Danube, near Gladova, or when exchanged into one or other of these posts. I could not find out, however, that either they or their ancestors had ever done anything, beyond being born there, to merit seclusion in this narrow sort of Botany Bay.

Then, at last, we came upon shops in curious out-of-the-way little lanes,—for houses we saw none,—or rather wooden booths than shops, most of which were shut on account of the fast. And those of the sheds that were open seemed to offer nothing for sale but unaccountably shaped brown pots, and a little tobacco, and great stores of various nasty-looking sweetmeats. But here the Turks, that lay behind the low dingy shop-boards, or lounged in front of them in groups, were evidently real, genuine, unmistakeable Turks; some of them were superbly dressed, or, at least, had bright many-coloured shawl turbans on their heads, and looked mightily picturesque, with their long handsome beards. They all stared at

the strangers with those sharp demon-like eyes, which had before startled me in the Parlatorium at Orsova: and one swarthy fellow;—he was a sweetmeat-seller, although he looked little like his wares—fixed such strange light green eyes upon us, far more devilish than all the black ones, and full of an unearthly phosphoric fire, that he would have made my flesh creep, had I met him in a solitary glen, where I should have taken him, unquestionably, for a Turkish Xamiel; with all his demoniac glare, however, he was the handsomest of the whole set.

A barber's shed was open also; and there a barber, dressed all in white, was shaving a head,—a head all alone, like the heads you see in pictures on conjurers' tables,—for nothing was to be seen of any body attached to it, although there may have been one, possibly, beneath a sort of extended table-cloth that enveloped a part of the shop. I should certainly have taken this head for a block upon which Master barber was accustomed to practise the manœuvres of his delicate art in his leisure moments, had not its eyes rolled uneasily backwards and forwards, and given signs of life, or of some exquisite machinery not likely to be met with on an island in the Danube.

Another open shed there was, in which sat cross-legged, upon a large rush mat, a quantity of funny-looking little Turkish boys, who were employed in reading, five to a book, and all howling at the very top of their little voices. This was evidently the chief educationary establishment of New Orsova; but I saw no master to superintend it. A great number of other bigger boys were constantly running in and out, and up and down through the lanes, with kegs upon their heads, and very full black breeches about their little legs, looking like drummer-boys; although what they were doing with all these kegs, unless they were running about with them for their own amusement, I could not learn. And thus, through lanes lined with wooden booths, and conducting hither and thither, we came upon an open space lying once more by the river's side.

To our left were clumps of cypresses growing out of ruined walls close by the water; to our right, a wooden platform, upon a bank immediately overhanging the stream, was covered over with open woodwork, thickly overgrown with vines. This was evidently a sort of *al fresco café:* upon the raised platform squatted several Turkish soldiers in groups, looking vastly bored and unhappy, because they could neither eat, drink, nor, worse

than all, *smoke*, until after sundown, on account of the fast; some, to be sure, were making up their minds to it, by playing philosophically at dice.

Several boats were dancing in the stream, tied to the trees that grew upon the bank: some were already loaded with passengers about to start: among the motley groups were Turks and Servians, and Wallachian boatmen and Wallachian women. One of the latter, a fine but brazen-faced creature, had a fresh coronet of beautiful flowers intertwined with vine-leaves placed round her head, twisted in her hair, and hanging in clusters round her temples; she looked the very picture of a beautiful bacchante: to judge from her flushed cheeks and flashing eyes, she had no fast to keep, or had kept none, as far as *drinking* was concerned.

In another boat were two Turkish women, muffled from head to toe in dark drapery, so as only to shew their eyes, and looking like quiet spectres, waiting to be wafted over to the Elysian fields in Charon's boat, in contrast with our brawny living bacchante. In the prow of the same boat lounged a young slim Turk, who seemed perfectly aware that he was a strikingly handsome fellow, so coquettishly did he study his attitudes, so evi-

dently did he look out of the corners of his eyes for applause.

In all this scene were at every point pictures—charming, brightly coloured, living pictures; in every group, animation, stir, variegated confusion. For a time we wandered here, up and down, studying the various groups, and watching the laden boats, as, loosened from their fastenings, they floated down the stream, in the hopes that the Pasha might be wearied with his long devotions, and come out of the mosque; for we were told that he would be grieved to know that strangers should have been in the fortress, and that he should have missed the pleasure of conversing with them.

But it seemed that our Christian patience was no match for his Mussulman devotion; for we got wearied the first at this game; and being at length heartily tired of waiting for his excellency, we gave a fee to our old owl-eyed contraband Turk interpreter, and, stepping into our boat, were rowed further down the stream. We were scarcely started, however, when we discovered the Pasha coming out of the little mosque, with two or three attendants, and walking along a sort of esplanade by the water-side: we saw the "owl" hasten to meet him, and point to our boat: a white beard was turned

in our direction; and then the red-capped head was sunk upon the breast. As we saw the melancholy exile-looking commander then moving along the shore of his small narrow island towards his dilapidated palace, we could well understand that he was sorry to have missed the diversion of chatting for half an hour with two wandering foreigners, however insignificant they otherwise might be.

As we floated stoutly onwards down the rapid stream, our guides pointed out on the left hand the stream which divided the kingdom of Hungary from Wallachia. Close by, at the mountain's foot, stood the last border watch-house of the Austrian dominions: on the opposite side of the brook that severed the two lands we could see the Wallachian guard-house, which, even in the distance, looked miserably dilapidated, and unfit to guard aught, unless it were pigs. As far as we could judge, also, the first villages of the Wallachian territory were miserable to the last degree: we saw nothing but rows of what looked like mud-built hovels, unadorned with those constant bowers of trees which distinguish even the poorest villages in Hungary.

For some time after leaving the island of New Orsova—by the way, the remark struck me that

the titles of the two Orsovas are sad misnomers, the new one being so old and ruined, the old one looking so thoroughly new—we had heard the rumbling and roaring of the great rapids of the "Iron Gate;" but, before we could discover any symptoms of this fall of the Danube, of which so many glowing accounts had been given me, our boatmen pulled up to a sort of low promontory upon the right bank of the river. We had hoped that they would have rowed us down the rapids; but this our men, in spite of proffered bribes, utterly refused to do, not on account of any danger, but on account of the difficulties of towing the boat up again: we were obliged to content ourselves, therefore, by walking to the falls.

Across the neck of the promontory on which we landed, had been cut, we were told, in the Roman days of Trajan's mighty enterprises, a canal to connect the stream above the rapids with the stream below: although it was now long since choaked and covered, we fancied we could see the traces of this work. As we advanced along the sands of this desert tongue of land, amidst low sun-burnt bush-wood, the roaring of the river grew louder and louder; the stream hurried and eddied more rapidly, more furiously; the current began to

bubble and boil, and turn itself about in thousand-fold multiplied circles, with tossing waves and innumerable little whirlpools: at length we stood at the head of the fall, and wandering down the shore alongside it, were able to examine it in its whole length.

In speaking of the Iron Gate, however, I must reluctantly begin by confessing a double disappointment. In common, I believe, with most travellers, I had pictured to myself, in my mind's eye, the Iron Gate as a cataract of the Danube hemmed in between high black precipices—in fact, looking somewhat like a *gate;* but *gate* there was none: on either side the mountains receded from the banks of the river, and sloped pleasantly downwards to the flattened shore; the only *gate* was the long mighty reef of rocks which lay beneath the stream, and which metaphorical Turks seem to have called "a gate," merely because it is an obstacle that closes the free passage downwards.

My second disappointment was in the *cataract: cataract* there was also none. The fall of the river, indeed, is said to be considerable; but the extreme length of the whole descent, which, I believe, is upwards of two thousand feet, utterly did away with the effect of any *cataract*, or even

fall: perhaps at low water the appearance may be different, and more imposing; when we visited the Iron Gate, the Danube was at its full height. But when these two disappointments had been fully swallowed and digested, I could not but own to myself that the scene of the wild rush and whirl of waters, as we descended along it, and examined it in profile, was a grand one. The struggles and convulsions of the great masses of water were dazzling to the eye, and deafening to the ear; it was impossible to avoid that sense of giddiness which the gazing long upon greater waterfalls bestows. Black rocks, now rounded, now pointed, were continually appearing, and instantaneously disappearing, over the whole troubled face of the boiling river,—the breadth of which is said to be here some thousand four hundred yards,—like the backs of dolphins sporting in the water. The constant apparition in all parts of these huge dark spots added greatly to the giddy and bewildering effect of the rush of waters.

In the midst of these mighty whirlpools there are, it appears, three channels for the passage of boats: the one on the further Wallachian bank; a second, and the widest, in the midst; the third close by the Servian shore, on which we stood. At

low water the passage may be as dangerous as I have heard it described: during the fulness of the stream, as at the present time, the smaller Danube steamers descend the rapids without difficulty, and consequently must find means of returning also by the same way.

During a state of low water of the Danube, such as had been scarcely ever known, in the year 1834, an attempt was made by enterprising Hungarians to blast the rocks that then lay open to the view; but at the first experiment of the kind Turkish troops were despatched out of the neighbouring fortresses and garrisons to prevent the attempt, and even went so far as to begin to fire upon the audacious demolishers of their gate. Negotiations were afterwards entered into with the Turkish government to effect this purpose; but the waters did not wait upon diplomatists' delay and protocols, and rose so much again as to render any further experiments vain. The Turks would willingly now permit a task, the result of which could only be advantageous to all parties; but since that period no occasion of a drought so favourable has again occurred.

While we still stood looking on the rapids, two long boats, loaded with Servians, appeared above us.

They came darting down the stream, in the passage near our bank, with terrific rapidity: now they were tossed and turned, now they were hurried onwards. For a moment I drew my breath painfully; but, whatever may be the intricacies of the channel amidst the sunken rocks, the boats were evidently skilfully piloted; they were swept past us in one flash, and carried on below by the force of the stream; and then were speedily lost to our sight behind a small promontory on the bank.

Lower down, between a green, wood-covered little island and the shore, we observed several wiers, apparently made of osier-work, inclining in double lines, narrowing gradually nearer and nearer to each other, upon the same principle as decoys for ducks, in order to catch in the nets placed at the end, the fish carried down the stream. This fishery, I was told, is chiefly of the *hausen*, the famous Danube sturgeon. The green island and the wooded banks, through the trees of which peeped small, white Servian cottages, formed a strange picture of peace, and quiet, and repose, after the convulsive strife of the waters of the Iron Gate.

After struggling back along the bank of the river, through sand, and low bushes, and dry

straggling roots that impeded everywhere our footing, we reached our boat again on our return, with pleasure, for the heat of the day was intense. On remounting the river, we were towed up the stream along the Servian bank, with far more expedition than I could have expected. Every now and then, however, we were requested to get out, in order to lighten the boat, which was tugged along by three of our boatmen, who never ceased shouting and calling to each other, as they stood at distances along the lengthy line, now letting fall the rope, now catching it again from the stream all wet, now rounding a small promontory with difficulty, now wading through the water. These continued disembarkations took place in order to avoid the more rapid currents in parts of the river.

As we approached the Fort Elizabeth which I have already mentioned, we again landed; and while our boatmen were climbing round the rocks, upon which stood its walls overhanging the water, and at the base of which the stream whirled tumultuously, we passed through this curious, climbing, castellated edifice, under which the road passed. There were about twenty soldiers, I was told, in the fort, dispersed among the stories

of these towers above towers. Clinging to the rocks close by the walls were several miserable little huts, standing above the road, with their terraced little gardens full of dried and scanty vegetation: the windows of these hovels were covered with oiled paper; rags, for which no earthly use was discernible, were hanging on rocks and bushes, as if set out, as upon beggars' persons, to make wretchedness look more wretched. Were these the abodes of the soldiers' wives?

Certainly, in these semi-Turkish lands, objects must be looked upon in the distance; and then they are picturesque: and picturesque enough were all the various scenes that greeted us on our passage up the stream, without the necessity of going far off to look at them.

Servian boats, filled with bright animated groups of fishermen, were skirting the shore. Presently came on horseback a very handsome, young, bearded Servian, in all the effect of his full semi-oriental costume, followed by two mounted attendants, also in the national attire: he smiled courteously, and saluted the strangers with a graceful wave of the hand, as he rode by. He was the chief magistrate, we were told, from a small Servian town immediately opposite Orsova.

Shortly afterwards we came upon two Turkish salt-barges, which had been stranded by some mismanagement in the force of the current, and lay shipwrecked, as it were, upon the bank; the boats were being slowly and lazily unladen, while two Turkish women, veiled all over with black coverings, sat squatting on the rocks waiting until the work should be done. Presently, again, we were met by carts, full of gaily-dressed Servian women, with white muslin turbans twisted about their heads, like pictures of Hagar—by what painter have I seen such?—and bound under their chins with full bands of muslin; and they looked, as everything else did, "all picture!"

Thus pleasantly amused, we felt no tedium in our progress as we were towed up the stream; and when, at last, we reached the bank opposite Orsova, we were rowed across to our destination with a lovely sun-set, that illumined the surrounding mountains, and made the Danube glow again, as if it were drunk with blood-red wine.

I will not spoil the pleasant effect of our sun-set scene by any detailed accounts of the exorbitant demands of the various officials who had accompanied us, or of our anger, or, when a menace about the commandant failed, of the threat we

uttered, of appeal to his pretty niece. The pretty niece again stood our talisman on the occasion, even in name alone. Our official brigands moderated at once their insolence and their demands, and accepted what had been previously agreed to. What magic was there in that person—in that name which had protected us? Had we known anything of the "mysteries of Orsova," perhaps we might have learned. We left the place, however, ignorant of the nature of this mystic charm; for, after a tolerable supper in our "grand hotel" and a good night's rest, we availed ourselves of a steamer, the next morning, to remount the Danube.

As we embarked, we found upon the quay a little dark-eyed, Jewish-looking French boy, who was lamenting, in despair, that there should be no steamer that landed on the Wallachian and Moldavian shores for nearly a fortnight. His manœuvres to win his way into the good graces of two ladies who had a carriage, and were going by land to Bucharest, were very curious and clever. He looked a boy of about fourteen years of age; but I never saw a more active and enterprising spirit in one so young. What turn of fate had sent him alone, so far from his native France, to the

other end of Europe? We were obliged to start, without knowing anything about his history or his fate.

My journey is done; my *ultima Thule*—the furthermost frontier of my congenial Hungary—is reached. I have explored the beauties of my lovely Danube to its last Hungarian point; and I return. Dare I hope that I have inspired you with any part of my own passion, which, to you, as yet, has been uncomprehended? What will be my answer?

LETTER XIX.

THE DANUBE'S WILES.—LINGERING PASSAGE UP THE STREAM OF THE DANUBE.—PLEASURES OF THE SLOW VOYAGE.—RETURN FOR THE VINTAGE IN SYRMIA.—RECOLLECTIONS OF PREVIOUS SCENES OF THE VINTAGE. — VINTAGE SCENES BY THE ROAD-SIDE.—THE COURT-YARD OF THE CHÂTEAU OF A GREAT VINEYARD PROPRIETOR.—ANIMATION AND CONFUSION DURING THE BUSY SEASON OF THE VINTAGE.—THE PREPARATION OF THE WINE.—VINTAGE SCENES ON THE ROADS, AND IN THE HILLS.—A WORD ABOUT SYRMIAN WINES.—AN ADIEU.

I HAVE already described the Danube to you as an arch coquette in more ways than one. This dangerous quality is strikingly evinced in one particular,—namely, in the seductive arts with which the Danube allures the unwary traveller down its stream, and then catches him, as in a trap. "*Facilis descensus. . . .sed revocare gradum, hoc opus, hic labor est!*" How easily we glide down its mighty course, dazzled, gratified, enamoured! Not always smoothly, to be sure; for rapids, and whirlpools, and sunken rocks have risen in our way, like the agitations, and struggles, and jealous doubts

of the lover; but how alluringly and rapidly have we been led on, ever down and down the stream! And when the entrapped individual resolves to go no further, and return upon his steps, how the coquette opposes its resistance, how it multiplies every obstacle to prevent the escape of its admirer; it seems determined not to relinquish its prey, until, tired with its long coquetry, it turns him adrift, at last, upon the open world of the Black Sea.

My task of retracing my steps was a far less easy one than I had imagined; the space so quickly glided over in the downward current requires nearly treble the time to be remounted against the force of the stream. But a bold heart, that sets at defiance the demon *ennui*, who, by the way, may be always found in life to fly from you when you resisted him manfully, and stout steamers will overcome, with perseverance, even the wiles of the powerful Danube. We bid the syren do its worst, and paddled up the Danube courageously.

It would be folly in me, however, to weary you with any detailed accounts of our long passage upwards, amidst those scenes which I have already endeavoured to describe to you. As is general on such occasions,—for of the many who steam down

the Danube few ever appear to come up again, just as if the river had devoured her travellers when it had done with them,—we were almost the only passengers on board,—in fact, between Orsova and Drenkova, the only two; and to these *two* passengers were allotted, positively, *three* captains, who walked in an everlasting trio up and down the deck in their gold-bordered caps, or lounged or drank coffee, and, as if they had imbibed a genuine oriental spirit on coming from below, pashaed it in grand style over the whole vessel: and we, poor humble passengers, waited to dine, like servants in small families, until our masters had done their dinners; and the waiters looked listless and *ennuyés*, and, because they had little or nothing to do, did that little or nothing with far less zeal and activity than when worried out of their wits with all the demands and counter-orders of an over-crowded cabin.

"Oh, the dull, dull weary journey! Oh, the weary, long, never-ending hours!" had exclaimed to me a friend, to whom I announced my determination of coming up the stream again, as I went down. But I cannot say that I found the voyage for one moment dull, or the hours for any one of their moments weary ones. In spite of our determina-

tion to resist the artifices of the Danube, it smiled kindly upon our whole passage: the true coquette, you know, always throws out her most seductive allurements to those who seek to leave or to resist her; the Danube and I were never better friends than during the days and nights—they were three, I believe, but they might have been four, for I never counted them in the opiatic *dolce far niente* state of my passive enjoyment—that were spent in stemming its powerful stream between Orsova and Semlin. In fact, I revelled in what to others appeared tedium. In the length of time necessary for the performance of the journey, I had greater leisure to admire at my ease and quietly feast upon the wondrous beauties of the river,—not swallow them in hasty morsels like a glutton, without the possibility of due digestion, as in hurrying down the stream.

I made a long luxurious banquet of the splendid defile of Kazan, and found out in it a thousand fresh dainty bits, a thousand new points of splendour, that only flitted past me like ghosts before; and, as we struggled more convulsively than ever against the rapids, I experienced a sense of enjoyment in the powers of our steamer that I had not before felt.

At Drenkova, where we spent the first night, we again went and goated it to our hearts' content among the lovely hills; and no goats ever frisked, in the body, more joyously than we did, in the spirit, in the enjoyment of the picturesque scenes around us. We gazed at leisure upon the beauties of each of the great Danube lakes; we made acquaintance with each yawning cavern in the dark defiles; we found a thousand new grimaces in the great rocky flanks and precipices of the mountains, which our fancy had not had time to shape into distinct forms as we had swept past them, sometimes exciting bursts of laughter; sometimes they excited shouts of wonder, sometimes feelings of awe, or, at least, a passing flash of poetical sentiment; and we found new aspects in the mountain scenery, new points of beauty among the hills, new scenes along the shore, new colours, new lights and shades; and the big bright unclouded moon grew and grew upon us, in the dark blue skies, as we wandered by night up and down the steamer's deck, until it seemed determined, in order to charm us, and prevent our minds from feeling one single moment's sense of weariness under its deep mysterious inspiring influence, to grow fuller than its full,—the good, kind-hearted, sympathetic moon!

Passengers also came on board by degrees; and, if they were not always "all my fancy painted" them, at least there were pleasant points to be struck out of them, and sparks of information and amusement, as there may be out of most people, if we did but always possess tact enough to go cleverly to work with our moral flints and steels. And, when the wonders of the defiles and ravines were passed, came the open river with its objects of interest also,—objects enough for those who have eyes wherewith to look upon them, or a mind wherewith to understand them, or a heart wherewith to feel them. And, after the other Servian towns upon our banks, came the Servian capital, Belgrade, to awaken, once more, interest and amusement also, with all its bright oriental pictures around and about it. In short, had any one ventured to ask how I had contrived to vanquish the fiend *ennui*, I should have answered, as did Nelson when a little boy, on being questioned by his grandmother whether no "fear had assailed him in his solitude during a dark night:" "*Ennui!* What is it? I did not see it anywhere!"

But to enter into any details of all this journey would be a work of supererogation, as I have before declared: in one of my last letters I have said my

say upon the whole of this part of the Danube; and, although I might have said it much better, now that I have had time to study its nature more fully, I cannot go over the same ground, or rather water, again.

It was my purpose, as I have already told you, to return to my friends in the villa-*château* I have described to you upon the Danube's banks, in order to witness some of the scenes attendant upon the vintage season in Syrmia; and the vintage in Syrmia may be looked upon as a momentous affair, when one reflects that Tokay, the pride of Hungary, has for many long years, in the estimation of Europe, worn the crown as the king of wines; and that, in the opinion of many connoisseurs, the choice Syrmian wine takes as high or a still higher place in the hierarchy of vintages.

Two years ago I had witnessed the preparations and preliminaries for the wine-harvest in Syrmia; but I had seen only the first act or two of this gay comedy, since circumstances took me away from thence just in the midst of its performance; and now, as I was told upon the steamer, I was about to arrive in time to witness those last acts which I had not witnessed before. The unusual

heat and drought of the summer had hastened the period of gathering the grapes to some days earlier than had been expected when I left the spot.

My mind, however, was still full of the scenes of the season's commencement at which I had been already present, when at every village corner, at every meeting and greeting, under every shady doorway of every public-house, as in the drawing-rooms of the lords of the land, peasants and gentry, young officers and old women, one and all and everybody, had discussed vintages and vines, rainy and sunny days, seasons past, present, and to come, and delivered most sententious opinions upon crops; when a sudden saturnalia seemed to have broken loose over the whole country, and gipsy music was heard before every wine-house door, and the dark eyes of the swarthy peasants gleamed still more savagely than usual from amidst their masses of long black hair, for the Syrmian harvest-home, like an Irish wake, seldom passes over without a general fray, with the difference only that the shilelah here gives place to the knife, and that the dead corpse is only too often to be met with instead of the bloody sconce,—sad evidences of the facility with which the passions of these hot Hungarian

and Ratzian temperaments are influenced; when the peasant girls put on their brightest petticoats, and tied their cleanest white kerchiefs over their brows, and smeared their oriental faces with white and red paint with all the arts of old coquettes, for the vintage season is the season also, not only of especial sweethearting, but of marrying and giving in marriage; when the steward of the lord was ever to be seen strutting in the court of the *château* outbuildings, superintending the lazy lads who were employed in repairing and hooping neglected casks or tumbrils, and scolding and hurrying them, and never getting them to advance; when the great white oxen seemed to put their necks to the yoke of the heavy cart, as it climbed the mountain path with more than wonted energy, and opened their full dark eyes still wider, as if they were aware that the times of labour in festivity, and festivity in labour, were come; when the Greek priest put on his finest robe and his best gold-embroidered stole, and combed his long black beard daintily, in order to bestow his blessing upon the first early grapes brought in full baskets to the painted church by joyous little peasant boys, attired in the simple but so picturesque white costume of the country; when in the vineyards, and

woods, and mountain ravines, upon the hill-top or by the side of the valley stream, fires gleamed, here and there, in the dusk of the darkening evening, on spots where family groups or little parties who remained out all night among the hills were cooking and eating their *olla podrida* supper; when the very moon seemed to shed a brighter and more magical light over the whole country, as it does now, the same good old full moon of two years ago, and to bestow with its rays a cheerier and more balmy influence than usual, as if to bless the vintage.

Such had been my recollections of the commencement of the vintage season in Syrmia. I knew that it was not only an important time for the inhabitant, but an interesting occasion for the traveller to witness all that is bright, and wild, and strange, and picturesque in the manners and customs of the land; and, to my mortification, I was told that I had come back *almost* too late.

However, I doubted not that there was much still to be seen and observed; and when, after our long voyage, the steamer at last landed us, in the forenoon of a bright day, at the landing-place of the town of Carlowitz, where a carriage already awaited us to convey us over the heights of Peter-

wardein to Kammenitz again, I felt as eager and joyous as befitted the season and occasion.

In fact, I found upon our whole road, as we mounted the frontier town of Carlowitz, the hills, which I had crossed scarce ten days before, teeming with bustle and animation. The vineyards that skirted the road, then so deserted by living objects, were all alive with moving human creatures, mounting, descending, gathering, stooping, lying, in every posture, in every variety of group. Our very passage was constantly obstructed by the confusion of the vintage proceedings: frequently whole troops of my favourite white oxen, in teams of two or four, or as many as six, formed a wall across our way, to a distance, the depth of which was invisible; and, since all these teams had big, long, wooden carts at their tails, the solidity of these walls seemed at first to be insurmountable to our carriage with its light Hungarian horses. The confusion was that of the last and worst refuse of the baggage-waggons that follow upon the tail of an army.

How we ever got through these obstructions and proceeded on our way, it would be difficult to say: a great deal of shouting, and swearing, and flogging, and dragging seemed to facilitate

but little the process of discumberment. By the dint of much noise and struggling, however, we managed to cut our way through countless quantities of these armies of oxen, and grape, or tub loaded carts, that rose Hydra-like upon our way, a greater one invariably following upon a lesser.

After all these hindrances, we came, also, upon troops of women who were carrying loads of grapes in wondrous fashion. Over one of their shoulders they bore a bent piece of wood, after the fashion of that which milkmaids used to carry in other days, and perhaps still carry in some places, for the support of their pails. From the hooks at each end of this species of yoke hung large clusters of grapes reaching almost to the ground, arranged in such wise that each cluster, of some hundred grapes or more, looked only like one gigantic bunch, reminding one of the well-known picture of the two Israelites carrying in triumph the miraculous bunch of grapes from the discovered "land of milk and honey." I afterwards found out that beneath each of these large masses of grapes was a machine, made of reed and osier-work, large and rounded above, tapering below, upon which the bunches were so fixed and inter-

twined as to form those Brobdignagian bunches, of which each woman carried two: the name of this machine, or structure, or whatever it may be called, is, in the Sclavonian dialect of the country, *evenka.*

Further on, by the road-side, at the foot of a steep hill, was a huge open vat, elevated upon a mound of earth: in this vat were several men, their full white trousers rolled up as high as possible about their bare legs, stamping with all their might, and, as they alternately raised their feet, displaying nether legs that seemed besmeared with blood; the blood, however, was but the juice of the grape, and they were acting as living presses for its production. From a small aperture at the bottom of the rim of the vat gushed forth the juice in a continuous stream, which fell into lesser vessels arranged one above the other, each on its lesser mound below, so that a cascade of juice was flowing down to the lowest. The sight was not a very cleanly one to persons unaccustomed to this preliminary manœuvre in the fabrication of the wine of the country; but, as the fellows were singing lustily and merrily, it was, at all events, a joyous one.

Past such living scenes, all giving evidence of

the bustle of the vintage, we rolled on towards our destination. There was animation in every feature of the landscape; all told of plenty, labour, and merriment; the hills were green and dotted with colour; the river below us, to our right, looked grand and abounding; a sense of strength and fatness of the land was upon all. And so it continued as we climbed the height of Peterwardein, skirted the hill-top, and, at last, descending through the steeper road of the village of Kammenitz, were greeted once more by the "Salve" carved upon the *château* gates.

I found a pleasant and congenial party assembled in the *château*, and all those diversified pleasurings with which country life is endeavoured to be enlivened in all countries,—sometimes, alas! so as to be turned into town-life gone mad among the daisies,—but nowhere so pleasantly as in Hungary. But I have already told you that I am not fond of picnic pastorals, nor of idyls at all times, much less in muslins and varnished boots, unless, perhaps, in a small and select, *very* select and *very* small, company—of two, for instance; and, moreover, the vintage was the especial object of my visit, and is intended as the especial subject of this letter, so I must pass over a variety of little

tit-bits of aristocratic country customs, of peculiar doings, of scenery in the country round, of anecdotes connected with our party, or the neighbouring towns, or neighbouring *châteaux*, of smooth scandal may be also, all more or less illustrative of Hungarian manners, morals, and other matters, which I had intended to dish up to you as *hors d'œuvres*. I shall do no more than mention to you such scenes as are connected with the getting in of the Syrmian grape harvest.

To the right of the drive-up, half-hidden amongst the trees, is a wide court stretching down to the river's banks, surrounded with the various habitations of the *beamten*—the officers of different degrees employed on the seigneurial estate,—and with all the outhouses, offices, stablings, granaries, brewing-houses, and I know not what besides, necessary to a great establishment and the business of an extensive estate. In this great court I have passed a morning watching all the bustle and animation attendant upon the vintage season on the lands of a large vineyard proprietor. About it are motley crowds of men, women, and children, in the dresses of the peasants of the country, all employed in various manners, but a great portion of them in incessantly rolling about in all directions a

great quantity of vats, tumbrils, tubs, and other wooden vessels, of all sizes, shapes, and descriptions, great, middling and small—in fact, in keeping up, as if it were a necessary accompaniment to the business going forward, a constant theatrical thunder, such as you may hear upon the stage, but multiplied a hundredfold in force, and as unceasing in rumble as during one of those Hungarian storms I have described to you; in truth, at a little distance out of sight, it might be supposed that a violent thunderstorm was coming up during the whole day, although it never comes.

In all corners of the court are stowed away the wooden carts of the country almost in heaps above each other; and patient white oxen are stabled *al fresco* at the further end near the river, devouring their fodder quietly, or still more quietly chewing the cud. Wine-merchants and publicans from the neighbourhood are also incessantly driving in, with the usual Hungarian dash, splash, clatter, and firing off of whip-shots; and there is a great chaffing, and bargaining, and bantering, in groups, with the estate-agent, and steward, and other minor *herrschaftlichen beamten.*

Peasants and peasant women are conveying also their tithes of grapes, due to the lord of the

land, as a part of the rent for the tenure of their little farms, in huge baskets on their heads, or wooden vessels, to other *beamten* who sit at tables before their dwellings, busily occupied with large registers, in which they note down the tithes received, and with receipts, which are given for the rent paid: the grapes have been marked and numbered as far as well may be, beforehand, upon every tenth row in the vineyards of the peasants. And around the *beamten* are their wives and children, all seemingly very busily employed either in helping or hindering: the women are seaming and mending and patching sacks for the grapes, and stamping black stamps with the initials and coronet of the lord upon them, sitting either on their own little stools in the open air, or on the steps of their house thresholds: the children are playing and quarrelling in all sorts of places where they are sure to be in the way, and receive a quantity of thrusts and kicks that do not mend their humour. What would I not have given for the pencil of a Wilkie to have painted this curious, animated, variegated scene of an Hungarian "Rent-Day," of so peculiar a nature in the Syrmian wine land, mixed as it was at the same time with all the peculiarities of the vineyard harvest.

In the centre of the court, however, is the most extraordinary part of the scene. There are erected upon mounds two long rows of large vats, that are elevated over long moveable wooden groves or gutters, into which the juice pressed from the grapes in the vats pours from apertures in each: these two lines of gutters, running, as we are told did the street gutters in old German towns upon occasions of the imperial *fêtes* of the middle ages, if not with wine, at least with the juice of the grape, lead downwards from the sloping position in which they are gradually placed to one gigantic tun sunk deep into the earth towards the lower part of the court; and in all the vats are three or four men, their *gatyahosen* tucked up high about their legs like those we have already seen, stamping, and kneading, and pressing with all their force, and laughing, and shouting, and singing again, as if the noise were a necessary part of the process.

Around and about the vats are also several peasants, employed in cramming the bunches of the grapes brought by carts into large sacks, which others then convey up little moveable wooden steps, and throw into the vats to be trodden. Others also receive the sacks, which are thrown out again, when supposed to be sufficiently pressed

by the tramping of the many feet, and wring their last possible liquid out of them by twisting them, as housemaids might twist a wet towel, into separate pails.

Others, again, are fishing out of the great general sunken vat into which all the juice flows the liquid thus obtained in wooden trough-like receptacles placed at the end of long poles, and then, poising their full burdens on their shoulders, convey them into the large open buildings on one side of the court; and thither I also go to see what they are about. But before I go, I ought to tell you, that in the scene I have witnessed to-day, the grapes of every sort, both white and red, have been mixed together to make the commoner wine; the wine produced from the mixture of colours, in whatever part of the country it might be, goes under the generic appellation of *schiller* wine, which some foreigners have imagined to have been a distinctive name for the wine of some peculiar vintage. This mixture of the grapes is only employed for the production of the general mass of common wine, from which the vineyard proprietor derives his chief revenue; the other better and nobler wines are formed apart from the separate kinds of grapes, and after different and very peculiar

fashions; but about these processes I will burden you with a few words further on, for I am in a hurry now to drag you off into the out-buildings where the wine-making process is going on, and then to other vintage scenes among the hills.

In these great wooden outbuildings which stand open, with large double barn-like doors, are enormous vats, some twenty times larger than those in which the simple and natural feet-pressing process goes on; and up the great ladders placed against their sides men are continually ascending, to pour into them the contents of their poised troughs: here the noise is a sort of cataract roar of a continual falling and splashing of liquid.

In these huge vats the process of fermentation of the wine is allowed to go on. In another smaller building close by are men employed in pressing in wooden presses, over tubs, the lees of the grape skins, as they are left in the sacks after the last wringing out: the liquor thus obtained is fabricated into an inferior sharper wine. Further on stands the *branntwein haus*, the brandy or spirit distillery, in which preparations are being made for the cooking of the last lees thus trodden, then wrung, then pressed, into a spirituous liquor.

Estate agent, steward, *beamten*, wives and

children, purchasers of wine, peasants and peasant women bringing down the loads of grapes in carts, peasants and peasant women bringing their own loads of grapes as tithes, men employed in packing the bunches of grapes into sacks, men employed in pitching the sacks into the vats, men employed in treading, men employed in fishing the juice out of the general receptacle, and carrying it up into the fermentation vat, men employed at the wooden presses, men employed in carrying hither and thither the lees of grape skins,—to say nothing of the manœuvres of the *branntwein haus*,—put them all together, and you will find before you a far more complicated, although less ingenious problem, than that about the "cats, kits, sacks, man, and wives," who were, or rather were *not* "going to St. Ives," which used to be proposed to us, as children: at all events, you will have some idea of the bright shining scenes, the animation and confusion attendant upon the grape gathering and wine-making manœuvres of the vintage in Syrmia.

Towards evening, a proposal was made by some of the *château* party, to undertake a rambling excursion into the hills behind the park, in order to witness some of the "humours" of the vintage

in the open air. Nothing could be more congenial to my own individual humour; and we set out, a merry laughing party, on our sunset expedition. In the road that skirted the park upon the brow of the first hill we stumbled upon a quantity of gay pleasuring groups of the inhabitants of Peterwardein or Neusatz, who had been spending the day merrily, as is the fashion of the season, among the vine-gardens of different smaller proprietors, and dining, or taking their evening meal in the vineyard summer-houses. Some were in carriages, as befitted their superior station; others were in laughing parties on foot: the elder component parts of these groups were walking on more or less steadily, although seemingly elated by the joyousness of the occasion; but gay youths had twisted wreathes of vine leaves about their heads, and tendrils about the canes on which they brandished their hats, and looked, barring their frock-coats and "dittoes to match," like young bacchanals; and merry young damsels, with laughter in their bright eyes, had behung themselves with garlands of vine leaves scarf fashion; and there was much merriment and joke and joy, and a great "kicking up of dust"—I mean actually and really, not by any means metaphorically—along the road. For the *weinlese*

is the season of festivity, as well as labour, among high and low, rich and poor.

Peasant women, and their children were also coming from their own little peculiar vintage with large baskets full of grapes upon their heads; and, although they sometimes staggered with weariness under their loads, they did not seem the less gay, the less full of the influence of the abounding season, for all that. Here already the scene was sufficiently animated. But presently we turned up stony gullies from our road into the upper hills, and wandered here and there, with curious intrusion, into the vineyards on their sloping sides.

Here the scenes were still more strange and fanciful. In some, beneath hedge-rows behung with masses of creeping plants, were littered down heaps of straw and dried leaves, on which groups of peasants of both sexes had lain down, men and women together pell-mell, for the repose of the night: here and there sat knots of girls, murmuring low together, and having evidently a great deal of important matter to talk about, in their own little coteries, before they slept: in far corners, where the bright moonlight had difficulty in piercing some thicker canopy of bush or creeping plant,

and where the shade was deeper and darker, we thought we could distinguish something of the proceedings of rural flirtations; but these retired nooks we were too discreet to investigate more closely.

In others, again, were lighted fires, at which suppers were being cooked or eaten; and clustering groups sat round, in the strange fantastic picture-like lights and shades produced by the struggles of the moonlight and the firelight. In one spot the supper was concluded, and there was a great romping and shouting between "men and maidens;" some of the girls were springing over the still burning fires to avoid too hardy lovers, and then turning round with a coquettish laugh, to raise up a quantity of lighted wood-embers in their regardless hands, and fling them in the faces of the audacious youths or of each other: or when some young gentleman's conduct was really too naughty, he was seized by two or three stout damsels, and dragged, as if through a fiery ordeal to test his truth, across the burning wood, if not, perchance, flung down upon his back into it: but all this seemed to be acted in a spirit of vast good-humour and good-fellowship.

Here and there came now the sound of gipsy

fiddling across the air, now the more mournful strains of the Sclavonian bag-pipe; and in the vineyards, whence this rural music proceeded, were parties dancing in the moonlight, untired after the labours of the day, upon some elevated hill terrace, on which their forms in the distance must have made the most extraordinary pictures of dancing spirits, or of the Willises of true Hungarian legend. Now and then, however, the mirth of these rustic balls seemed to be quickly mounting, *crescendo*, into a tumult of riot, from which our ladies withdrew; and with the female part of our party, we, more curious gentlemen, also went away, one of us, at least, however, perfectly satisfied with the wild fantastic scenes of vintage manners, which he had found an opportunity of witnessing.

Before I close my letter, a word or two, as I promised, about the Syrmian wines; and if the matter prove but of little interest to yourself as well as to me, take "the will for the deed," and give me credit, once for a while, for going through my bounden duties of a properly-behaved tourist. Even the weakest of these Syrmian wines have a full, slightly bitter taste, which give them some resemblance with those of Spain; but they have, generally, more of the sweet—not the cloying,

thick sweet of some of the southern wines of Europe, but a fresh, sparkling, fruity sweet, which is their chief characteristic. They are produced, as you have seen, from the pure juice of the grape, unmixed and unadulterated, and are neither cooked nor prepared in any way whatever.

The Syrmian *ausbruch*, the choicest and most valued of all these wines,—that which often obtains the preference over the more generally celebrated wine of Tokay,—is not to be produced every season; its fabrication can only be expected in a very favourable year. It is made then by a process peculiar to the richer Hungarian wines. When the weather is especially dry and advantageous, the fuller and richer grapes are allowed to remain upon the stalks until they are dried to raisins in the sun; under less favourable circumstances they would rot, not dry; they are then only gathered in the late season. These raisins are picked very carefully and heaped together in tubs, bored below like sieves; and their oily juice is allowed to run off, pressed out by their own weight alone. It would appear almost impossible, at first, that any drinkable liquid should be extracted from the thick liquor thus expressed from this sweet, dry grape. By degrees, however, the thicker particles settle

to the bottom of the tub into which it is conveyed; and the pure wine is run off clear from the top.

The wine thus obtained is never in a state to be drunk until it has stood several years, some thirty or more, I was told; and at that period the second deposit made by this purified liquor is said to be sometimes so great, on the sides as well as the bottom of its receptacle, that, if the cask be broken, the wine will stand alone in an inward-formed cask of its own leather. Whether this story be apochryphal or not, the fact remains the same, that, after many years preservation, the result produces that nectar of nectars, as it is called, the Syrmian *ausbruch*. This superior sort is called, *par excellence*, the "essence."

An inferior, second-class *ausbruch*, although still of admirable quality, is produced by a commoner Syrmian wine being poured upon the first deposit of the *ausbruch*, allowed to remain for a time, and then strained. That this admirable wine should have been so long ignored in England, particularly as it is one of the few Hungarian wines which admit of exportation and travel, can only be accounted for by the recollection, that, while Tokay was long since known and celebrated

in Europe, the province of Syrmia and its vineyards were still devastated by the Turks, and that only in comparatively latter times the Syrmian vineyards were again made to bear, and the Syrmian wines again produced.

With this little lecture on Syrmian wines and vintages I must now bid you "adieu," as I must bid "adieu" also to my friends of the villa-*château* and the merry party it contains. The summer is flying rapidly away; my steps must now be turned nearer and nearer homewards.

LETTER XX.

ARRIVAL OF A FRIEND AT PEST, AND RETURN FURTHER UP THE DANUBE.—AGAIN COUNT STEPHEN SZECHENYI.—HIS PLANS FOR THE REGULATION OF THE THEISS, AND A STEAM-BOAT ON THE PLATTEN SEA.—ARRIVAL IN PEST, AND EXCURSION TO THE RUINS OF VISSEGRAD.—RAMBLES AND REVERIES IN THE OLD CASTLE.——DEPARTURE FOR GRAN.—RESTORATION OF GRAN.—PRESENTATION TO THE PRINCE PRIMATE OF HUNGARY.—SCENES IN THE COMITAT'S-HAUS.—THE EVE OF THE ELECTION.—THE CANONS OF THE CHAPTER OF GRAN.—THE CORTESZ.—TORCH PROCESSION AND SERENADE.—SCENES ATTENDANT UPON THE ELECTION OF COUNTY OFFICERS IN THE COMITAT'S-HAUS.—DINNER AT THE PALACE OF THE PRIMATE.—CEREMONIES OF TOAST-DRINKING.—AGAIN TORCH-PROCESSIONS AND SERENADES.—DEPARTURE FROM HUNGARY.—CONCLUSION.

My purpose of return has been somewhat hastened by the probability of meeting our friend Henry in Pest. As I flattered myself that his journey to Hungary had been undertaken, in some degree at least, for my sake, I felt that every hour of his society in the capital, which I might lose by any delay, whatever the temptations and seductions offered me to linger, would lie heavy on

my conscience; and, even had not this fancy possessed me, there was alive in me the consciousness, which no one can have more strongly than myself, that every hour, every minute lost of such society as *his*, were hours and minutes lost of life, and all that makes life worth living through,—sympathy, affection, knowledge, constant and abounding, from an ever-flowing spring of genius, sentiment, and poetry: such pearls as these are not lavished by every hand; there are not so many princes and princesses now, in these unfairy-like days, who let gems fall from their mouths, whenever they open them, and leave golden coins to strew the ground behind every impress of their footsteps; and I had no mind to think myself a "swine" for want of a little haste to go and pick them up.

In spite of treacherous weather, then, for the Danube now seemed to have made up its mind to spite me outright, for my felony of returning upon my steps, and attacked me with frowns and tears and sulky looks, *i. e.* with dull skies and rains and muddy waters. I started from my Syrmian *château* as soon as I had got a letter announcing his approaching arrival at Pest, and, after all, spite of the Danube's ill-humour, I had the best of it again;

for, on driving with some friends over the bridge of Peterwardein, to the Neusatz station, I found a considerable excitement prevailing in the open court before the landing-place: the cannon on the shore were fired seven times, to salute some great man on board of the steamer, coming from the lower part of the Danube, on which I was about to embark, and responded to as often in the same mysterious number from the deck of the boat; and I soon learned that Count Stephen Szechenyi was on board, on his way to Pest. You see I had the best of it.

The Count was returning from an expedition to the Theiss, having been employed upon a mission to examine into the means of regulating, straightening, and embanking that capricious and winding river, which, from its size and connexion with so many important places of Hungary, is a stream of vast commercial importance to the country, but which its many deviations and its numerous sand-banks had rendered as yet unnavigable to steam-boats very far up its course: by the embankment of the flood, also, it was hoped to prevent the periodical inundations of the river, and thus gain for cultivation a quantity of valuable land, which would amply repay the landed pro-

prietors on the banks of the Theiss for the outlay of expense they would be called upon to make in the furtherance of this admirable and gigantic work. Attached to this scheme, moreover, was a consideration of a philanthropic nature, which had more weight in my mind than all. By the embankment of the river there was no doubt that the periodical fevers, and other diseases which afflict at seasons the population on the banks, arising from the exhalations of the swamps left by the inundations, would be entirely prevented. Count Szechenyi was accompanied not only by his own private secretaries but by several other officers and engineers appointed by the government, and who, with their papers spread upon tables in the cabin and the *rauchzimmer*, gave the whole steamer the air of a government office. Hence all the bustle and excitement that marked the arrival of the steamer at Neusatz.

In spite, then, of the Danube's treacherous, ill-behaviour to me, and the confusion which prevailed during the occasional rains, when restless fellow-travellers made incursions into the recess of the reserved *rauchzimmer*, to which I had been admitted, *par privilège*, for day use as well as sleeping, and ruthlessly seized upon our books

without leave or permission, I cannot say that *I* experienced one moment's tedium in the agreeable society afforded by the steamer during our voyage of two days and nights between Neusatz and Pest.

The Count spoke of the enterprise about to be undertaken with regard to the Theiss with enthusiasm as to its certainty of success, its comparative facilities after the investigations and engineering observations made, and of the great and important results it would produce. He spoke to me also, at much length, of another project, undertaken under his influence and superintendance, which interested me more than he may have supposed, namely, the establishment of a steamboat upon the great lake of Platten, in the more southern districts of Hungary. This new vessel, that was to bring movement, activity, commerce, life into a part of the country, which until then had lain comparatively lifeless, was to be launched in about a month.

I visited this part of Hungary last year, as you may remember; and, during my wanderings on the shores of the beautiful Platten-See, I had built castles in the air upon it, and dreamt dreams of prosperity about it, and formed fancy plans of

my own connected with it, in what I supposed childishness; and now these airy castles were to take a solid form, their foundation was about to be laid, these dreams were to become, with the help of Providence, realities, these childish and bootless plans were to receive their commencement of execution. Another great step towards the civilisation and commercial prosperity of his fatherland was about to be made under the auspices of this stirring, enterprising, and active-minded man; and whatever be the suspicions raised against his loyalty and faith, as a patriot and as a man, by his present political enemies, the country at large cannot but own that he has done more than his due towards its rising greatness.

Our voyage up the Danube, under such semi-official auspices, was a veritable progress. Flags were flying on almost all the station-houses, and at almost every landing-place a salvo of cannon received us. The castle of Illok also saluted us as we passed with a veritable battery, to which the steamer responded with its best little thunder. The count on the steamer, and the prince in his castle, thus greeted each other in the distance. In such instructive society, and very pleasant too, withal,—for among the government officers was

my good friend, Pista Sz——, also,—what thought could there be of tedium? and tedium there was none on our voyage. It was almost with regret that I quitted the prison-walls of our steamer,—almost with a pang of the heart that I shook hands with the many agreeable acquaintances on board,—when we at last arrived once more at Pest.

I found, on my arrival, that I had outstripped Henry at our place of rendezvous; but he joined me in a day or two from above, having lingered longer than he intended at Karlburg, with the Zichys; and of course he was welcomed with delight. I cannot again enter into any details about Pest, from which place I have already despatched three letters to you, nor about all our doings and dealings, great and small, and sight-seeings, and loungings and lingerings in pleasant places and with pleasant people. For all this I have no longer time or space; and yet how willingly would I drag you about with us through all the streets and environs of this gay alluring capital; you are wanted to complete a trio of congenial souls,—pray take no offence at the word "souls," which, spiritualised as ought to be its meaning, has a sort of *bon vivant* sound in common interpretation, far

from our thoughts; it must suffice to you that you were often present with us "in the spirit," as indeed you have always been to me throughout my whole journey. I have the fanciful trick, when I gaze, in foreign lands, upon scenes of surpassing loveliness, of shutting my eyes, and, before I open them again, wishing that those I best love might, by some magic art, contemplate with me the same striking pictures; and, thus wishing for you by my side, I have gone, winking and blinking, through my whole Danube journey.

To one of our excursions, however, I cannot chuse but to invite you. I had long desired to visit more intimately those beautiful ruins of Vissegrad, at the foot of which I had so often passed upon the water; and so, one bright congenial morning, we took the early steamer upwards, bent upon a long day's ramble within the walls of the old castle. A letter had been given us to the forest keeper of the district; and upon landing at the station of Vissegrad we directed our steps to the *waldmeister's* house, pleasantly situated in the long shady street that runs at the mountain base and skirts the river. The "good man" himself was absent, but the "good wife" received us hospitably; and one of

her sons, an active, merry-looking young student, was given us to act as our guide among the ruins.

We chose a pleasant but steep path up the mountain side, along a "Calvary," dotted with its white saintly-pictured "stations." On the spot to which this first path led at last was a small chapel, formed in a crevice of the rocks, half screened above by creeping plants, and protected by a little gate of open iron-work: at the foot of the steep precipice, on the top of which it was thus nestled in the rock, stood another picturesque chapel, far brighter and gayer in its bower of acacias, by the water's edge.

From hence we walked up the ridge of hill to the right of the mountain on which the ruins rose, until we reached the base of the higher eminence so boldly crowned by them. On one side of us were charming views over the Danube's course; on the other over lovely little romantic green valleys, each with its separate little stream, diminishing as they mounted into ravines in the sides of the surrounding amphitheatre of mountains. Bright spots we were told by our student-guide there were among these mountains, and legends connected therewith; and in one stood a *teufels mühle*, or devil's

mill, all ruined and shattered on account of some dark tale of assassination, like one of those mysterious ruined water-mills one finds in romances and melo-dramas; and our young friend told us tales also of treasure-seekers that wandered eternally among the old ruins and awful places in those valleys, and performed superstitious rites to raise the hidden spirit-guarded treasures; and I had some hopes of having my path crossed by my curious, strange-tempered, but good-hearted old friend Gabriel Maas; but he played me false; and all the rest of the bright scenes that were described to us we were obliged to take for granted; for we continued to mount higher and higher round the mountain summit up a stony path between the rocks, sometimes skirted by vineyards that swept down into the valleys, but chiefly between high overhanging green hedges of wild lilacs and laburnums. At last, upon the side furthest from the river, we came upon a great pile of gateway, that formed the entrance to the old castle: stone ledges still shewed where balconies and galleries had adorned this gateway tower. And now we wound up further paths amidst broken walls to the great mass of the ruins where they frowned over the river: and here we mounted from pile to pile of

masonry, higher and higher, old shattered gothic windows affording us wonderful views over the stream below and the mountains on the other side, framed in, as one loves views to be, with frameworks of stone mullions; and these views were generally separated into several distances or flats, as I think they call them on the stage, the front flat being generally composed of a low foreground of other ruined walls; and so we came at last to the highest summit of the immense climbing pile.

And here again were many ruined towers and chambers and shattered windows, in some of which the woodwork was still visible, in spite of the long, long years of decay. In the midst of these topmost ruined walls were two large deep holes, walled with masonry, but choaked up with rubbish at a few feet below the soil; these our young friend informed us had been the castle wells, although certainly one of them with its great aperture looked far more like the entrance to the dungeon of a keep or some sort of horrid *oubliette*, than like the opening of a well; and he told us also a strange incomprehensible story about some ducks having been thrown down one of these so-called wells before they were choaked up, and having come out upon the surface of the river far, far below,

through some hidden communication with the bed of the stream—a story which, although it may have left us rather sceptical, excited at least a laugh.

After rambling about some time among the ruins, our young guide would have fain persuaded us, with many earnest entreaties, to descend to his father's house, where his good mother had already made preparations for our dinner; but our fancies were still too much engaged in the beautiful scenes around us, to allow us to give up the flights of romance in which we might be inclined to indulge, for any such earthly matter as eating; and, at the risk of offending the good dispensing priestess of the rites of Hungarian hospitality, ever so friendly, ever so ready, and in spite of the blank looks of our pleasant young guide, we could not tear ourselves away; but we despatched the student with our compliments and excuses, promising to come down in the afternoon and accept a collation of fruit.

When left alone, Henry threw himself down beneath a rock below a pile of ruin, while I made a forage into a vineyard at a little distance; and having rendered an old woman happy with a *zwanziger*, I returned with a load of luscious grapes.

So there we lay beneath that rock, and eat our grapes and sentimentalised to our hearts' content; and before us were the loveliest views over the Danube at our feet, and then, *beyond* the tops of the mountains on the other bank, other distant glimpses of the stream once more with its surrounding mountains, in one of its numerous windings in the direction of Gran; and down the stream were slowly floating rafts, with little crawling human things on them; and we followed them with our eyes in their slow downward course, and wondered at their destinies and the lives of those little human beings on them, and when they were gone at last, dreamt on and fantasized again.

When we at last rose to descend from the ruins on the side opposite to that by which we had mounted, we found ourselves above the elevated valley where once upon a time bloomed the wonderful gardens of the kings of Hungary, the gardens that, in the midst of the luxuries of the court of Mathias Corvinus, had earned themselves the title of "one of the wonders of the world," the appellation of "a paradise on earth." The valley was green and smiling, but no trace of its wonders was there except a solitary pond, which had perhaps been once one of its brightest ornaments, but

now adorned no court unless it were that of the king of the frogs. And along this valley we passed, and then descended down, down, down what seemed an interminable height, through woods and vineyards, and by the side of long ruined walls of masonry, until we came upon that huge octagon tower which I have described to you from my steamer's deck in a former letter—the tower where Solomon, King of Hungary, was confined by his rebellious subjects, and which bears his name to the present day. The walls of this tower are of such a thickness as to have defied the ruin of time; the windows are deeply set in the massive masonry, and can have admitted but little light; the interior is now filled with rubbish, which rises to the height where formerly began the first floor: near it, close by the water's edge, are outworks, now entirely ruined. The noble as well as the melancholy aspect of the tower struck us greatly; this nobility seemed still to be due to the prison of the captive king, the sadness to a spot where may and must have passed historical scenes of suffering, if not of crime.

On this spot we were met once more by our young student friend, accompanied by his elder brother, a forest-keeper in another district; and these two young men amused us by awakening

with their guns the wild echoes among the ruins above and below and in the hills around.

Our collation now awaited us, and we were going to the *waldmeister's* house to receive with gratitude the hospitality offered to the strangers, when—*l'homme propose*, but Danube steamers *disposent* otherwise—a screaming little agent of the steamer rushed across our path to tell us that the evening boat was to be seen paddling down the river far before its expected hour; there was but just time to reach the shore; and again were excuses to be offered and adieux to be made to our kind would-have-been hosts: shots from the young men's guns saluted our departure as we climbed the steamer's deck, and hats were waved. We were shortly again in Pest, and so ended our pleasant excursion to the ruins of Vissegrad.

Henry left me sooner than I could have wished, upon a further journey, to meet me again in Vienna; but my good Florian shortly joined me, and we had our own little purpose before us of witnessing at Gran the scenes of a restoration or general election of county officers, which takes place afresh in each *comitat* in Hungary every three years. Two or three days afterwards, then, we were domiciled with kind friends in the archiepiscopal little city once more.

Unfortunately for my love of stirring confusion and animated popular scenes, the *comitat* of Gran happens to be one of those counties in Hungary where electioneering matters go off tolerably decently and quietly,—where there is no cudgelling, no drawing of sabres, no fighting in the streets, no pulling down of houses, no charging of adverse parties, no bloodshed and fray,—in fact, none of those more lively proceedings which frequently mark the progress of elections, not only for the deputies to the diet, but of the trienially appointed county officers—as upon this occasion—in several of the *comitaten* of Hungary, where party spirit, feud, faction, and political opposition are displayed with all the energetic violence characteristic of Hungarian temperaments.

You may be inclined, perhaps, to quarrel with me for my word "unfortunately;" I will own it has a semi-bloodthirsty look about it; but, although I deprecate any supposition on your part, of my fostering in secret a fondness for looking upon broken heads—and, God forbid, the "still worse" that often happens—I own that something more of "feud and fray" in a country where all popular scenes are so delightfully picturesque, than I was told I was likely to come in for during the "restora-

tion" of the orderly behaved *comitat* of Gran, would have enlivened in my eyes the comedy I was invited to witness,—ever with the proviso that it kept within the limits of "comedy," or even drama, and did not turn to tragedy; besides, I might have got livelier matter for a more amusing letter to you. See how insinuatingly I want to bribe you into sharing my naughty regrets! The fact is, that the greatly prevailing influence of the archbishop primate of Hungary, who, from his residence in Gran, fills *ex officio* the post of *ober-gespann*, or lieutenant of the county, gives a more pervading tint of order to all public proceedings, and absorbs in one centre the various branches of those interests, for which great rival landed proprietors of different political parties in other districts so tumultuously contend: the same reason may be assigned for the great preponderance of the government party in the comitat of Gran, (as far as Hungarians, not immediately attached to the government by place or other ties, can be said to belong to such a party,) the quiescent position of the far smaller more liberal party, and, in consequence, the comparatively dull, matter-of-fact, orderly proceedings in all matters of elections. I say "comparatively," and *why* you may see in

the account I am about to give of the scenes I have witnessed. Since I cannot take you with me to a more riotous county, we must e'en make up our minds to what is dished up to us here; and perhaps you may, after all, find more of the *piquant* in the mess than from this preamble I have led you to expect.

One of my first duties, on the day preceding that of the election, was a visit to the archbishop primate. Having been informed that he was ready to receive my visit, I accompanied my friend Florian to the palace, a small unpretending temporary structure, at the base of the precipitous promontory on which the cathedral so boldly stands, and where the future residence is, one of these remote days, to be erected. The interior of this house, with its long suites of rooms, corresponded in its simplicity with the exterior; the furniture was rich, to be sure, but unpretending, somewhat stiff, but with a certain degree of comfort, and yet but little in accordance with the position and the immense revenues of a prince primate of Hungary.

Nothing could be more affable and agreeable than the reception we met with, although marked with a certain natural dignity of manner on the

part of the noble prelate that was perfectly in place. I certainly had not expected so much extreme *tact* of manner in a man, who, however exalted now his situation, is of comparatively humble birth, and unused, by any long experience, to the niceties of courtly bearing.

The Prince Primate is a tall, slim old man, with a pair of soft and most agreeable blue eyes, and a smile that corresponds as well to such eyes, as to the general mild, beneficent expression of his face. His long white hair was parted in the middle of his forehead, and fell upon his neck. As he rose to receive us, in his priestly robes, with his purple skull-cap over his white locks, he formed a very striking picture of a noble priest. His conversation was easy, natural, and in unrestrained flow, and turned upon all sorts of matters, unecclesiastical as well as ecclesiastical, upon art in all its branches, as connected with the unfinished cathedral, upon politics, and more especially English politics, with which he was perfectly conversant—as, indeed, is invariably the case in Hungary among all classes that have any pretension to education,—in fact, upon men, manners, and morals.

In all this *olla podrida* discourse the good old gentleman displayed a kindliness, a good-nature,

and even a gaiety of heart, that rendered the interview pleasant and sympathetical; and when, after having received an invitation to be present at the great dinner given on the morrow at the palace, after the termination of the election proceedings, we rose to take our leave, it was with the feeling of having spent as agreeable an hour as may well be passed in agreeable company.

In the afternoon we proceeded to the *comitat's haus*, and established ourselves in the rooms occupied by the brother-in-law of my friend, in his official capacity as an officer of the *comitat*, in order to be ready to witness any of the preliminary scenes that might take place. The rooms opened upon a long gallery that ran along three sides of the great interior court of the *comitat's haus*, and, as all was yet still upon our arrival, I amused myself by leaning over the railings of this gallery, and studying the aspect of the court of the shire-hall, if so it may be called.

The scene before me would have been a strange one to eyes less accustomed to Hungarian public edifices. The court of the great official building of the county-house might, at first sight, have been thought to look more like the court-yard of a farm. On one side stood a pump, and

troughs and tubs about it; close by the walls beneath us were ranged three or four peasants' carts, and, in a more obtruding and dignified situation, as befitted their more aristocratic worth, the open carriages of such *comitat's beamten* as had already arrived from the country; in the middle space were a few geese, and a pig or two, grunting at their ease and looking perfectly at home; there was a pretty sprinkling, also, of various kinds of dogs; a few children were running up and down, and playing at "cat get a corner," and concocting "dirt pies," such as many merry children *will* concoct in all lands; and one stray peacock was walking slowly about with a very shabby tail, looking as if he had lost his way in the *comitat's haus*, and could not get out again.

So far the scene was rural enough; on the opposite side of the court it was far otherwise. Beneath the gallery were grouped several of the prisoners of the county jail, in which capacity the monopolising *comitat's haus* also serves. Some of these *arrestanten*, in their dirty white attire, were lounging on stone benches, or leaning against the walls, or slowly moving up and down: among them was pointed out to me a famous robber, not long since captured, a great Herculean fellow,

with a "hang-dog" look, that did not, this time at least, belie his profession. Most of these prisoners had been let out of their cells to taste the fresh air for an hour or so: a few other minor criminals, employed upon the work of the house, were moving up and down engaged in their domestic labours, but all had fetters between their legs. It was curious to observe the difference between the gait of the elder prisoners, who had been long in confinement after trial, or who had enjoyed the hospitality of the county jail before, and the younger ones who were at their first essay: the former moved easily up and down, although with that strange shambling motion, which they are said saldom to lose in after life when liberated; the latter could not at all feel themselves comfortable with the sad heavy appendages attached to their ankles, and shuffled and staggered painfully about. The whole party were guarded by the *comitat's hussaren* in their gay tight uniforms, who marched up and down before the prisoners with drawn sabres. The scene would have been a sad and painful one, had it not been for the little children, some of whom were amusing themselves in mimicking the wretched gait of the unhappy men, or the dashing air of the hussars, as they strutted behind them with sticks upon their shoulders in

lieu of sabres. In all this what a strange mixture of innocence and crime—of country scenes with those of a town prison!

As the afternoon wore on, however, the *comitat's haus* began to grow more animated; sudden incursions were made into the galleries by men of all ages—*beamten* just arrived and their friends; and there was a distracted running in and out of the rooms opening upon the galleries, and a great variety of embracing and greeting of acquaintances, and no little noise, and shouting, and laughter, and confusion; and in some of the rooms were established card-parties, after a very desultory fashion, for there was a constant getting up and sitting down at the tables; and in each room there was shortly a cloud of tobacco-smoke.

I very soon found that a quantity of intriguing and manœuvering was going forward about two rival candidates for the post of *ober-stuhlrichter*, or head justice of the peace: and a sudden fear, also, had fallen upon the candidate for the office of *ober-fiscal*, or clerk of the peace, for he had expected to be elected unopposed; and now it was suddenly discovered that another, who had promised not to come forward, had broken his word, and was about to put himself up, and was already driving about in the country among the peasant

nobles who have votes, and stirring them up, and manœuvring after the fashion of election manœuvres in all lands; and, as a messenger arrived with this news, there was, all at once, consternation, and confusion, and a making of long faces. As the unexpected candidate was supposed to have promised not to "stand" in order to keep his adversary quiet while *he* intrigued, there began to be loud words about "a very dishonourable *ruse* on the part of a friend;" and there was talk about a duel; and questions arose in a "court of honour" established for the nonce, whether there were cause for such a consummation or not, and how it could be avoided; and letters were written and despatched; and young men darted off into the country upon expeditions of investigation; and others declared the whole affair a false alarm; and, at all events, there was, all at once, bustle and confusion enough.

But in the midst of all this agitation there was a duty to be performed. A previous official conference relative to the candidates to be proposed was to be held by the Prince Primate, who preserves his old right of acting as *ober-gespann* to the *comitat*, and presiding over all public affairs on great occasions, in spite of the modern appointment by the government of "administrators," in

many *comitaten* of Hungary, to take the place of the more ancient office of the *ober-gespann;* and the hour appointed for this "conference" had arrived. It was to be held by the archbishop in his palace and so to the palace I took my way with the crowd, in order to go through *my* duties as looker-on.

In a large room of the palace I found a striking scene already arranged. The primate in full robes sat at the centre of a long table; by his side was the superseded administrator in his richest Hungarian costume, looking somewhat sulky at his inferiority, with the consciousness that he could not have it all his own way; around the table sat, on either side, the *domherrn* or canons of the cathedral chapter, in their priestly attire; the nobles all wore the sabre, if not the entire national Hungarian dress; and there was state, and pomp, and show enough in the whole meeting. The room was crowded. The names of the proposed candidates were being mentioned as I came in: to some opposition was offered in angry murmurs, suppressed in their louder outbreak by the dignity of the primate's presence.

Then followed several speeches from different gentlemen, in all that pompous emphasis of Hungarian oratory, so characteristic of this high-

sounding language. I must suppose that, as the country at large has its O'Connells, as I have before told you, so each *comitat* has its own pet O'Connell also; for I was informed that, in spite of the quiet character of the *Graner comitat*, Gran also had its O'Connell, who was expected to make some stir that evening.

When this gentleman, thus announced to me, arose, I was prepared, from his reputation as a thundering orator, possessed of considerable powers of eloquence, to a display of some violence. He was a tall stout man of about thirty-two years of age, possessing, certainly, a considerable likeness to the Irish demagogue in form and expression of feature and frame, but, in face alone, a far more striking one to Macready; at all events, there was much energy, if not genius, in his look. But on this occasion the hero seemed determined not to shew off, as if to disappoint me, and spouted grandiloquently, to be sure, but in a very quiet and orderly manner. One single uproar arose from the crowd upon the nomination of an obnoxious *ober-stuhlrichter*, which was soon stilled. The business of the meeting was shortly over, and the crowd dispersed.

Beneath the gate of the palace I was introduced to several of the cross-behung fat canons, who were

dispersing to their barrack-like buildings. Some of these clergy were, I was told, and I have every reason to believe, very worthy men, possessing also considerable talent, acquirements, and science; but in the few with whom I happened to fall into chat I found a desire to appear knowing men of the world, rather than the ecclesiastics they were, and a *looseness* of language ill befitting any man, much less a priest. I was grieved at this; for it gave some warrant to the want of consideration expressed so widely in Hungary towards the clergy, and proved to me that the fault of regardlessness to religion in general might be traced, in a great degree, to many of its ministers.

Even in the streets by night, on the eve of the important election, there was evidence enough about the usually so quiet town, in hurryings here and there, and stoppings of acquaintances in knots, and flying rumours, and contradictory stories, that it was a moment of agitation. But this, I was told, was nothing. The cortesz had not yet come, and with the arrival of the cortesz there might be expected the real bustle and confusion of the time. This name of "cortesz," so strangely Spanish in its sound, is given to the mass of those peasants who still retain the privileges they obtained in the very ancient days of the first establishment of the

Magyar race in the land, although, in reality, but peasants in position, and who, in their title of "nobility," have just as much their right to vote in public matters, as the first noble of the country. On such occasions as these they generally make incursions *en masse* into the town where the election takes place, forming different troops, each under a leader chosen out of their district, which unite afterwards under the heads of the two different main parties. The *cortesz anführer*, or leaders of these bands, play a very important and conspicuous part on all public occasions when the votes of their followers are needed, and are courted, caressed, feasted with their bands, and cajoled in every possible manner. But the night drew on; the *cortesz* had not yet arrived; and, consequently, the election bustle was a mere nothing yet.

Before retiring to rest, however, I had another scene to witness. A serenade was to be given to a head officer of the *comitat*, who had refused to come forward as *vice-gespann*, or deputy lieutenant of the county, of which officers there are two, in order not to obstruct the election of a friend—a self-sacrifice which was to be thus popularly rewarded. A procession of numerous torches proceeded along the road-like streets of Gran to this individual's house; a most picturesquely illumi-

nated circle was formed before the door, and after the music of the band, speeches were held by the leader of the procession, to which the gentleman thus honoured responded from an open window on the first floor. Again the whole scene, with its *chiar' oscuro* effects, was striking to a great degree. But now, tired to bed, to prepare for the bustle of the morrow.

On the morrow—the great day—the sun was bright and the sky cloudless; and there was every prospect of seeing the election humours to the best advantage. At an early hour I was with my friend in the *comitat's haus.* Young and old men were already swarming up and down the stairs, hither and thither along the galleries, and in and out of all manner of rooms. One very old gentleman, his *attila* adorned with antique jewellery, and with long white hair, beard, and mustaches, was a perfect model for a painter. Among the crowd were mingling, now, two or three of the peasant-nobles, still in their peasant's dress, but with sabres by their sides; these were some of the *anführer* of the cortesz, who had come, after their entry with their bands into the town that morning, to receive last instructions from their patrons among the *comitat's beamten:* and there was a great greeting, and shaking of hands, and rubbing of

mustaches with these influential gentlemen: and the foreigner had to be introduced to them, and to shake hands also, happy if he got off without a hug from these picturesque bears.

Presently carriages began to drive into the court with ladies, anxious to witness the proceedings of the day, who, by the way, canvass, and manœuvre, and intrigue with infinite spirit and address, as ladies used to do some fifty years ago in England: and the young nobles began to swarm up and down, and in and out, still more than ever.

The galleries around the court were quickly thronged to excess, particularly at one end, where was a door opening from the great room that ran along part of one side of the court where the electioneering proceedings were to take place. It had been first intended, as was often the case, that the whole business should have taken place in the court in the open air; and certainly the scene, had this intention been carried out, would have been one of far more picturesque aspect than in a narrow room crowded to suffocation; but the Primate, it appeared, being suffering from a slight indisposition, feared the long exposure to the air.

After a lapse of some time, during which the thrusting and struggling about upon the gallery continued in full force, a great part of the thrust-

ers and strugglers went into the public hall, to superintend the official registration of the officers about to resign their offices. Afterwards, too, there was a still greater clearing, upon the departure of many persons to a neighbouring church to meet the Primate, and be present at the prayer to the Holy Spirit to bless the proceedings of the day; but I remained, without following them in this episode, at my post in the gallery of the *comitat's haus.* Another comparatively quiescent pause.

But presently came the sound of two contending bands of music from the street; and there was much shouting, and screaming, and tumult from without. The two great parties of the cortesz had arrived before the *comitat's haus.* All of a sudden there was a mighty rush of many men beneath the great entrance to the court. The two parties, with their several flags and bands of music, headed by two or three of the more spirited and enthusiastic young men of either side, and each of the many knots of men that formed the two masses possessing its leader, made a violent attack upon the building. It was the purpose of each party to get up the great staircase to the public hall before the other, so as to be the nearest to the table of the *ober-gespann*—the Primate —and try to turn the scale of the election by

their stronger and nearer shouts. The bands of music remained in the court playing at each other in rivalry, as if to gain the day by the overpowering force of discordant music, while the cortesz hustled up the stairs, struggling, pushing, shouting, and swearing, and thus disappeared pell-mell into the great room, whence their shouts continued to pour forth out of window and door, as if they were holding a general rehearsal for the principal drama about to be acted.

For the office of *ober-stuhlrichter* alone there seemed to be any likelihood of a violent contest; for the *ober-fiscal* alarm had subsided: and as the candidate who was already in office was hated for his pride, and the other, newly proposed, was feared for his rough temper, the parties were said to be pretty nearly divided in this "labour of love." The principal object of both parties being to get as near as possible to the table, of course the struggling within was still more violent than without; the names of the candidates were shouted as rallying words on either side. The agitation now kept increasing more and more, like boiling water; and the swarming was still more beehive-like, especially when the big bees clustered around the door which led from the gallery to the upper end of the public hall.

At length, hussars on horseback, as outriders, dashed into the court to announce the arrival of the Primate; the carriages of the Archbishop followed; shouts of "*Eljen!*" the Hungarian "*Vivat!*" with which every popular favourite had also been received, welcomed the Prince from those in the interior of the *comitat's haus*, as well as from the crowds in the street without. The Primate descended from his carriage, and, followed by the administrator, several of the *domherrn*, and a whole priestly court, mounted the staircase to the great public hall.

When in turn I squeezed my way from the outer gallery to the top of the room, I found it crowded to excess. The ladies were packed tightly into a gallery at the further end, and testified their feelings during the proceedings of the day by wavings of pocket-handkerchiefs, and minor tender shouts. The Primate, as president of the assembly, faced the crowd in a large arm-chair; his attendants were seated around; the administrator was in front of him. The business of the day was opened by speeches, held in honour of those who were about to retreat from office. At last the more important process of election commenced. The candidates for the office of first *vice-gespann* were nominated: the most deafening shouts instantly arose, names were screamed out at the top of all the stout lungs present; but

one name was said to have carried the day "by acclamation." Shouts of "*Eljen!*" again ensued. The newly-elected hero was clutched up into the arms of some of his friends, and held aloft, at the imminent risk of having some of his limbs, if not his neck, broken; and there he sat, or rather lay, all awry, for some minutes, in his devoted followers' arms, allowing himself to be shouted at, and looking very uncomfortable, until he was at last set down with more or less of tearings in parts of his embroidered and ermined white *attila*, upon the sight of which catastrophe he looked more uncomfortable still. For the election of the second *vice-gespann* a similar scene ensued; and after the Primate had decided that one name reckoned the most shouts, the fortunate or unfortunate possessor of it was also hoisted in his turn, and sat even more awkwardly and looked even more uncomfortable than his predecessor, he being more of a novice. And then Karl, my friend's brother-in-law, was elected without opposition to his new post, and got his ample share of "*eljens*," but was not hoisted, and was very pleased to get off without this unequivocally flattering ceremony of honour. At last came the great struggle for the contested post of "*oberstuhlrichter*."

At the nomination of the candidates, shouts still

more deafening than any that had as yet "rent the air" seemed to shake the hall and the very *comitat's haus* to their foundations; and whether the popular voices that proclaimed the contending names were "greasy," like old Roman ones, or not, they, at all events, choked the atmosphere with a foul stench of garlic; and the poor old Primate bowed his head like a reed before the storm, and looked as if he should have liked, had he been able, or his dignity not stood in his way, to have stopped ears and nose with one effort; he did what he could with one of his senses; he closed his eyes.

And now the two rival candidates were hoisted up beforehand to be looked at; and the whole mass waved backwards and forwards; and people were more or less crushed to death; and *attilas* were torn to strips. But one candidate's party had got the best place near the table, and made the most of it; and the other could not get near, and in the struggles of his people to push him forward thus hoisted, still more confusion took place, and he nearly fell headlong upon the administrator's pate. And then the shoutings and drivings were more frantic than ever, for the cortesz of the furthermost candidate, led on by a few ardent young men, tried to fight their way into a better place and drive their adversaries *vi et armis* out of

the hall. But after all it turned out as had been prophesied to me; the man of the party nearest the table was said to have gained the day. The poor Primate, deafened by the name shouted more immediately in his ear, decided that the former *oberstuhlrichter* had been again accepted by acclamation, in spite of the other candidate having the majority in the estimation of most, and a continued call for the division I own I wondered at this justice, when not the most, but the nearest noise was sure to win; but I was told all was right, and so I suppose it was.

This important point settled, the screaming continued for another half-hour; and the poor Primate again closed his eyes, for, in addition to the influence of sound and smell, the heavy drops of perspiration arising from the vapour-bath in which he sat were trickling over his venerable nose. By degrees, however, the waves of tumult were somewhat stilled, although there were a few lashings and dashings of a minor storm concerning the candidates for the post of *vice-fiscal*, or sub-clerk of the peace. In this instance the "acclamation" was said to be equally divided; and so people all poured out of the room to vote; and they squeezed one by one, a ceremony which took much time, into a small room hard by, where a sort of ballot

took place, by balls being put into two bags on the wall, over which the names of the candidates had been written. After a considerable lapse of time every body returned to the hall; the bags were brought by the sub-officers; and the balls were counted on the table. As soon as the number of the second bag surpassed the contents of the first by one, the further counting, although it continued, was completely deafened by the fresh shouts that arose. And then other minor *beamten* were nominated in heaps, and the announcement of their names was again hailed by minor "*eljen!*" And when the election of these more subordinate functionaries was gone through, all the officers were sworn in by sections; and all was over. Speeches, however, were still made, and votes of thanks given to the Prince Primate as president; and, at last, the poor old gentleman rose, seemingly in a great state of exhaustion, and was conducted in great pomp down to his carriage; and people dispersed more or less, some going to attend the service of the "*Te Deum*" in the church,—which I hope did them good, and helped to calm down their angry agitation.

And so ended the restoration of Gran. A more shamefully quiet, still, and peaceful restoration had scarcely ever been seen, I was told, even in the

quiet *comitat* of Gran; and I was condoled with by my friends for having only been able to witness so very humdrum and unspirited a business. I do not know what ideas of humdrum quiet I may have given to you by this hurried sketch; but I know that my own ears will ring for many a long day with all the deafening and tympanum-distracting noises that assailed them.

The great dinner at the archiepiscopal palace was a splendid repast, both as regarded the excellence of the cookery and wines, and the rich appointments of the table, and the fantastic glitter of the costumes of the guests assembled round it. Alas! I was the only black sheep in this gay many-coloured fold. To the variegated aspect of the scene the liveries or rather the uniforms of the domestic hussars of the Primate, in a dress of blue laced with silver, contributed not a little. About sixty guests sat down to dinner, including, of course, the newly appointed officers. A custom peculiar to Hungarian occasions of public dinners is the drinking of toasts, not at the conclusion of the repast, but during its whole continuance; and shortly after the removal of the soup the Prince Primate first rose and proposed the health—no matter of whom, I have forgotten now. The toast was prefaced by a long speech, and responded to by [illegible] more

lengthy oration; and thus during the whole dinner toast succeeded toast, and speech succeeded speech, protracting the affair to a seemingly interminable length. Upon the conclusion of the dinner, however, the guests followed the Primate to his drawingroom for a short time only, and then dispersed.

A curious habit in this drinking of toasts was invariably observed: the speechifier, who proposed the health of an individual, never addressed himself to the person thus honoured, nor even to the assembly *en masse;* he selected among the party a friend, whom he called upon to rise also, and to him he addressed the laudatory discourse in honour of the person whose health was to be drunk. Was this a sort of delicate subterfuge, to avoid wounding a man's modesty by thundering eulogium directly at his own head? If it was, there are not many countries, if any, where the praises would not have been accepted without blushing, even without this delicate reserve. When I asked what was the meaning of this fashion, I was told that it was an old custom, derived from very remote times in this oratory-loving country.

In the evening there was again another picturesquely swarming *fackelzug* with a band of music to the Primate's palace, to perform a serenade under the windows, producing again charming

effects of *chiar' oscuro*, and a pretty Von der Neef-like scene in the contrasted colourings of the moonlight and torchlight.

The venerable head of the Primate, with his white locks parted down his temples, had an admirable effect as he stood at an open window on the first floor, and briefly thanked the crowd. Then went the music and the torches to the other end of the town, to the house of the administrator; and again there were speechifyings out of all sorts of windows and doors; and again great shoutings of "*Eljen!*" as if Hungarian throats were of patent leather, or even cast iron, and never tired; and again were bright pictures. And so the day's confusion ended.

And now with my summer ends my Hungarian journey, and my pleasant discourse with you, and my bright dreams. The autumn tints are on the trees; an autumn smell, of moist, decaying leaves, is already on the earth; the very sun wears a veiled autumnal face, although still with that sweetly misty look which renders Hungarian autumns the loveliest I have ever seen, which softens so calmly, so highly even, the usual chilling aspect of approaching dissolution. But, alas! dissolution, however gaily it be varnished over, *is* dissolution: age, cheery, hale and hearty as it may look, is

age; however calm and sweet the end, the end *must* come. Yes! one by one the grey hairs of age appear upon the face of nature; the youth, the strength, the sunny smile of summer are gone.

The more I advance in years, the more heavily does each recurring autumn weigh upon the mind, the more readily does it come home to the feelings, the more deeply does it enforce a sympathetic melancholy, and never more than now, when I am about to quit a country that I cherish, and part from kind and valued friends—perhaps for ever! Awfully saddening indeed is such a season, when you see its decay reflected in the face of one you love. Nature will burst again into spring, and life, and joy: but can that body's decay hope for resurrection in this world? And so I go.

I go from hence. Florian, however, does his best to chase my uncontrollable feeling of melancholy, by accompanying me as far as Vienna. I go, at the same time, with other and more cheerful feelings as regards the destiny of this interesting country, which is rising in civilisation, and which, if not in the first fresh bloom of youth, is alive and stirring with that ardour and impatience of the semblance of youth, that, after the inevitable stagnation in advancement produced by long disasters and centuries of desolation, and the first sluggish

apathy succeeding to the relief from such a racking and sickly state of being, buds forth afresh into new energy and prosperity; as in warmer climates the trees will bud forth a second time after the first attack of autumn. With the sincerest wishes and prayers for the prosperity of Hungary, I go; with the best hopes also. I go, too, with the regrets that necessarily attend the departure from a land where all is so new, so interesting, so exciting to the observer, far more so, perhaps, than in a country in the full vigour of its manhood, certainly far more so than in a country past its prime, and struggling with an apoplectic excess of thick, and no longer healthy blood. Here all at least wears a certain garb of romance; and if you have found out *that* in my past letters, I shall have gained my end, for I wanted to prove to you no more. And so I go. And so I bid you, for the last time, adieu!

THE END.

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